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Patterns and paths : ethnic identity development in second generation Indian Americans.

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PATTERNS AND PATHS: ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN SECOND GENERATION INDIAN AMERICANS

A dissertation presented

by

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Education

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandparents,

Mota Dada
Vithaldas Bhatt
b. *ca.* 1899
d. October 4, 1983

Sharada Ba
Sharada Vithaldas Bhatt
b. September 1927
d. October 7, 1990

Ba
Alokishori Kantilal Joshi
b. December 20, 1923
d. October 8, 1984

Dada
Kantilal Amatharam Joshi
b. January 28, 1920
d. July 5, 2000

From Mota Dada I learned about hard work.
From Sharada Ba I learned about perseverance.
From Ba I learned about being a pioneer.
From Dada I learned the power of quiet strength wielded fairly.

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Judith Hudson, my "study buddy" and a fellow 2001 graduate of the Social Justice Education Program, always reminded me that I was not alone in this process. My classmates Warren Blumenfeld, Rosie Casteñeda and Leah Wing have been with

me since day one, offering up their individual mixes of support, friendship and irreverent humor.

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Mom, dad, and sister Hetal have been incredibly patient and supportive. Even when they didn't really understand what I was doing, they gave me unconditional love and support. I hope I made them proud by adding another "Dr. Joshi" to the family. My father-in-law, Glen Bartlett, offered the understanding that only someone who'd been through the doctoral dissertation process could and was always ready with an invigorating shot of enthusiasm for my work.

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I hope this work helps scholars, educators and social activists understand what it takes to make a real difference in the lives of today's Indian American young people.

ABSTRACT

PATTERNS AND PATHS: ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
IN SECOND GENERATION INDIAN AMERICANS

SEPTEMBER 2001

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This study examines the ethnic identity development process of second-generation Indian Americans, the first sizeable cohort of Indian Americans to come of age in the United States, and identifies major factors involved, exploring the salience of each across the lifespan. The inquiry included a detailed look at the role of religion and the impact of racial and religious discrimination in ethnic identity development.

This study is predominantly qualitative in methodology, employing a semi-structured interview protocol with 41 research participants. Research participants were also asked to rank the salience of eleven predetermined factors using a modified Likert Scale. Research participants were young professionals and graduate students, aged 22-32, residing in Atlanta and Boston.

The research findings reveal the most salient factors affecting second-generation Indian American ethnic identity development to be the presence or absence of an ethnoreligious community and the individual's sense of (dis)connection with such a community; "dimensions of culture," including food, ethnoreligious celebrations, clothing and Hindi popular films; trips to India; knowledge of the family language and

participation in the family religion, or the lack of such knowledge or participation; and experiences of racial and religious discrimination. While the salience of each factor alone and in relation to others changes over the lifespan, the experiences of most research participants mapped four specific trajectories of ethnic identity development.

This study pays particularly close attention to the role of religion. Research participants self-identified as Atheist, Catholic, Christian, Hindu, Ismaili, Jain, Methodist, Muslim and Sikh. Religion – experienced as community, culture, family, belief and ritual, and knowledge – has a multidimensional role in second-generation Indian American ethnic identity development. The context, content and intensity of "religious" experience varied across the lifespan. Whether social, spiritual or "symbolic," religion is omnipresent in the lives of research participants, even those who do not consider themselves "religious."

Experiences of racial and religious discrimination also affected ethnic identity development. Research participants reported covert and overt experiences of racial and religious discrimination at all life stages. They experienced religious discrimination in the form of direct insults, Christian proselytzation, and inaccurate depictions of their religion in the media and popular culture.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Indian migration to the United States is a part of a larger emigration pattern in which natives of India have spread to all "corners" of the globe. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 opened the doors for immigration to the U.S. for Indians and other Asians. By ending a 40-year ban on immigration from Asia, the Act allowed an unprecedented influx of Asian immigrants to the United States. Emigration from India to the U.S. had begun in the late 18th century, but was abruptly halted in 1924 with the enactment of the National Origins Act of 1924. Between 1924 and 1965, few Indians were allowed to enter the U.S.(Jensen, 1988; Takaki, 1989).

Indian immigrants were the largest Asian ethnic group to enter the U.S. in the years following 1965 (Steinberg, 1989; Takaki, 1989), and the Indian American population now numbers nearly 1.2 million – four times higher than just two decades ago. The regional distribution of the U.S. population of Indians is: Northeast 35%, Southeast 24%, and Midwest 18% — making Indians the largest Asian subgroup in the northeast and southeast. Seventy-five percent of the Indian population in the United States is foreign-born (Lee, 1998b). The children of these Indian immigrants – specifically, those who arrived in the U.S. between 1966-1976 – are the 1.5- and second-generation individuals in this study.

The term "1.5 generation" refers to immigrants born in India and arriving in the U.S. before adolescence.[1] The term "second generation" refers to the American-born

[1] The term "1.5" or "one-and-a-half generation" was coined by Ruben Rumbaut to characterize the children who "straddle the old and the new worlds but are fully part of neither" (Zhou, 1998). Use of the term has

children of Indians who immigrated to the United States as adults (Zhou, 1997).[2] My research focuses on this cohort: the children of immigrants, both those who arrived here at a young age and those born in the U.S. to immigrant parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996a). In the interest of brevity, I will refer herein to the entire cohort as "second generation."

As children of immigrants, the second generation is exposed to a range of cultural experiences that includes aspects of Indian culture – the traditions, experiences and thought patterns their parents bring with them to the U.S. – and aspects of American culture. The home environment often incorporates aspects of "both" cultures, while the environment beyond the front door is profoundly "American"; the child's identity is shaped by both and by the interaction between the two. One of the most significant ways to understand the experiences of second-generation Indian Americans is to understand their ethnic identity development process.

Because the experience of the first generation — those Indians, the parents of the second generation, who arrived in the United States as adults — contribute psycho-historical experiences that affect the socialization of their children (Alvarez as mentioned in Hurtado, 1997), there are references to the immigrant generation herein; however, they are not be the focus of my study. In the 1990s, researchers began examining factors affecting second-generation non-meltable ethnic Americans (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996b; Suzuki, 1979). Prior to such research studies, no research focused on the unique aspects

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not been consistent and is usually dependent on the social and historical processes of immigration and on the specific nationality. The second generation is broadened to include foreign-born children arriving at pre-school age 0-4 years, because they share many linguistic, cultural, and developmental experiences similar to those of immigrant offspring. The "1.5 generation" is sometimes broken down into two distinct cohorts: children who arrived between 6 and 13 years of age as "1.5-generation" children and those arriving as adolescents (aged 13-17), who are more similar to 1st generation children. (Zhou, 1997)

[2] Although a sizable group of Indians arrived in this country between 1907 and 1914, the adult population today is still made up primarily of first-generation immigrants.

of the second generation experience; the experiences of second-generation Americans were subsumed either within studies of the immigrant experience or within studies on racial categories such as Indian, Chinese or Asian, Black, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic White. The socialization of an adult who immigrates to the U.S. in his or her mid- to late 20s is vastly different from that of a child of Indian heritage who is predominantly socialized in the United States.

Before I proceed any further, it is important to note that in the U.S. the words *ethnicity* and *race* are often used interchangeably.[3] Racial identity in the U.S. does affect the ethnic identity process. Understanding the process by which individuals develop ethnic and racial identities is therefore an important part of understanding the total person.(Miller,); ethnicity and race exert significant influence on each other. For the purposes of this study, however, the two must be dealt with as distinct concepts. *Racial* identity is based on a sociopolitical model of oppression, on a socially constructed definition of race and on how individuals may develop positive or negative attitudes towards their racial group (Helms, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1997). By contrast, *ethnic* identity may involve a sense of connectedness with one's national, cultural, linguistic and religious origins; it may include the particular prejudices and cultural tensions that the individual experiences when one comes in contact with the dominant White group (Helms, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1997). In addition to acknowledging the frequent conflation of these terms in American speech, it must be noted that ethnicity and its components (such as religion) are frequently racialized. This is particularly true for members of "unmeltable" ethnic groups in the U.S. We cannot understand ethnic identity

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[3] Indeed, many of the research participants in this study used the two terms interchangeably.

in the present without understanding the historical processes that racialize the factors affecting ethnic identity (Pierce, 2000).

There is a growing interest in ethnic and racial identity development of people who belong to ethnically and racially targeted groups, i.e. non-Whites and non-Christians who historically have been disenfranchised, victimized and exploited by the dominant White American society. Social identity models based on race and ethnicity are important because they help us understand how members of target groups maintain and affirm their ethnic cultures and how they make sense of their experiences of ethnic and racial prejudice and discrimination in the United States. Such research is particularly important for second-generation Indian Americans, for whom the related questions of ethnicity, culture, racial and religious oppression have barely been explored, and who today are asking, "Who am I?" Throughout their lives, Indian Americans undergo Americanization, a process of navigating, adopting, adapting and combining ethnic traditions, beliefs and values inherited from their national, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds and fostered by their families, with aspects of the dominant (White and Christian) American culture.

I decided to research ethnic identity development in Indian Americans to better understand the psycho-social processes that shape their socialization experience. This study identifies and explores the multiple factors affecting ethnic identity development in Indian Americans and "maps" a constellation of patterns in their experience. The individual experiences reveal multiple trajectories of Indian American ethnic identity development.

I came to this subject as an Indian American myself, one with questions about the development of an Indian American identity. Existing ethnic and racial identity development models — such as those based on the experiences of African Americans, Japanese Americans and Chicanos — are of insufficient breadth to address the experiences of second generation Indian Americans who are now in graduate school and in the workforce. These models were very helpful to me in understanding racism at the various levels in U.S. society and how it affects people of color and White people. At the same time, I found many of the concepts did not apply to the experiences of second-generation Indian Americans. These models were a resource from which I extracted certain ideas and applied them to my experiences, but no model spoke directly to the Indian American experience. Surveying the nascent yet growing body of literature on the second-generation experience (Maira, 1998; Leonard, 1997; Gibson; 1987), I found few studies that focused racial and religious oppression effects on ethnic identity development. A theoretical framework which accurately reflects the experience of second-generation Indian Americans — individuals negotiating the multiple dimensions of two very different ethnic cultures — is needed for theorists, educators, counselors and other practitioners to better understand the Indian American population.

Before considering a model that incorporates the experiences of second-generation Indian Americans, I needed to "take a step back" and establish the factors affecting the ethnic identity development of this group. While conducting a pilot study, I found religion to be an important factor in the ethnic identity development process for several Indian Americans. In relation to other influential factors such as language and ethnic culture, religion was not only of paramount importance, but also it was the most

neglected in parallel studies (Cross, 1991; Hurtado, Gurin, & Peng, 1997). None of the existing ethnic identity models isolate or explore religion as a marker in ethnic identity development. This may be because religion was not as important in the ethnic and/or racial identity development of other groups; it may also be because religion is not seen as legitimate in social psychology. Based on other research studies (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996; Yeh & Huang, 1996), I also expected culture, religion, and language to be among other factors involved in the identity development process. I focus on religion as a factor affecting Indian American ethnic identity development because it is a particularly understudied area. I believe this study is a contribution to the understanding of Indian American ethnic identity development. Further, my discussion of religion as a factor will be a supplement to parallel studies where religion is ignored.

Purpose of Study

In this study, I first identify and examine factors salient in the ethnic identity development process; I also attempt to discern a pattern or patterns of experiences. Ethnic identity is one aspect of the important question, "Who am I?" It constitutes a basic part of the ethnic individual's personality, and is a major factor in ethnic group formation, maintenance and social ties. Ethnic and racial identities are fundamental parts of the psychological profile of any individual who is a member of a racially or ethnically heterogeneous society (Rotheram and Phinney, 1987). Although information about Indian Americans is available that pertains to demographics, religion, family, assimilation and the role of families, the research as a whole is disjointed. There are a handful of integrative studies (Leonard, 1997; Maira, 1999/2000)that consider multiple dimensions and so offer an understanding of ethnic identity for Indian Americans. This

study contributes to the existing body of research on how the multiple dimensions of ethnicity affect the mapping and evolution of Indian Americans' ethnic identity development; it should help identify a constellation of experiences or developmental processes.

Second, I explore religion as a factor affecting ethnic identity development: Does it play a role in Indian American ethnic identity development? If so, what type of role does it play? My pilot study, conducted in 1996 and 1997, revealed two major findings. First, many research participants conflated religion and ethnicity. Second, participants described religion as a major vehicle for retention of ethnic culture for Indian Americans. When Indian Americans — who may be Hindu, Jain, Muslim or Sikh — encounter America's Judeo-Christian milieu, religious affiliation becomes an especially significant way of self-identification. Interestingly, this is true whether one is a strong adherent to the faith, secular and participates in rituals "symbolically" or for social reasons. The Indian immigrant generation has utilized religion has a major tool in the transmission and retention of cultural and religion traditions. Therefore, in order to understand the process of ethnic identity for second-generation Indian Americans, it is imperative to explore the role of religion for this population.

Third, I want to understand how experiences of oppression affect ethnic identity development in second-generation Indian Americans. Scholars in the field recognize that ethnic identity constitutes a basic part of an individual's personality, and is a major factor in group formation, maintenance and socialization. Ethnic and racial identities are fundamental parts of the psychological profile of any individual who is a member of a racially or ethnically heterogeneous society. Second-generation Indian Americans are

navigating their way through the Indian Diaspora experience in the American Black-and-White racial paradigm, and at the very same time they are also finding out about their Indian ethnic, cultural, and religious background.

The three themes discussed above are presented in Chapters Five through Eight. In Chapter Five, I lay out the factors research participants reported being the most salient in their ethnic identity development process. In Chapter Six, I show that religion is indeed a factor in ethnic identity development of second generation Indian Americans and that religion is experienced in numerous ways and its meaning and intensity vary over the lifespan. In Chapter Seven, I focus on experiences of oppression – both racial and religious – reported by the research participants. Chapter Eight describes the Identity Clusters I have identified each of which represents a constellation of experiences and which collectively reveal the multiple trajectories of research participants' ethnic identity development, based on the relative salience of factors discussed in previous chapters. In Chapter Nine I provide a conclusion and discuss the implications of my findings and future areas for research.

Major Research Questions

1. From the perspective of Indian Americans,
   a. what are the major factors involved in Indian American ethnic identity development?
   b. how do 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans rank the salience of the multiple factors during the different periods of their life?
   c. are there any developmental patterns in the factors, or in their salience or their interactions?

2. Given the importance that religion has in the lives of Indian Americans and its relative absence from ethnic identity developmental models, what is the specific role of religion in the ethnic identity development process for Indian Americans?
3. From the perspective of Indian Americans, has the experience of discrimination, racial and religious, been among the challenges to their ethnic identity? If yes, how do they understand racism? What kind of experiences have they considered to be discriminatory? Moreover, what do they believe is the impact of such discrimination in the U.S. on their Indian American ethnic identity?

The Question of Identity

The lives and experiences of Indian Americans in the U.S. who are children of immigrants or young people who came with their families raise interesting questions about identity. For the members of the second generation, the question of identity is not as easily settled as it is for their parents. Their parents claim they are Indians because they were born and raised in India, were active members of the Indian society for decades or years, have left much of their memories and histories in that society, "think and act Indian," relate to the Indian culture more than to the American culture, and (in many cases) still hope to go back to that society someday. Do these conditions apply to the second generation Indian Americans or something else? What are some of the factors affecting ethnic identity development of second generation Indian Americans? Is it familiarity with some of the Indian languages and the Indian culture? Do they "think like an Indian"? Is it their behavioral and attitudinal characters that determine their identity as Indian or American, or is it not having an Indian passport and being an U.S. citizen? Is it about eating Indian and regional-specific food, or is it the cognitive and emotive

identification with the Indian culture and society that really determines whether these second generation people regard themselves as Indian, Indian-American, or American? Is it their being born to an Indian parent? The degree to which they derive their values from the Indian culture? The amount of Indian food they eat? The fact that they identify themselves religiously as Hindu, Jain, Muslim, Sikh or Christian? These questions are serious and the answers have important consequences for the type of research we can do and the kind of issues we need to deal with.

Within the home environment of India it is not difficult for children to identify with images and roles provided by parental culture. However, in an environment where the cultural values of parents are practiced and acknowledged only at home, "Indian culture" is the source for multidimensional conflicts. It appears that the second generation Indians, raised by one or two Indian parents, living in the midst of Americans in mostly suburban environments, going to schools with predominantly White middle class Americans, increasingly adopting the American lifestyle and cultural norms, are developing a unique identity quite different from their parents'. What is this identity and how it is formed is the focus of this study.

Generally skilled and educated, Indians have had a relatively positive experience in the American labor market and educational system. But in the social realm Indian Americans grapple with invisibility, stereotypes and the exoticization and commodification of Indian culture, its peoples, and its religions. Experiences of prejudice and discrimination have had significant impacts in the lives of those who have encountered them. Furthermore, the second-generation Indians Americans are faced by challenges which are partially typical of the experience of being a second generation

"American" and partially unique to them because they are born into Indian Jain, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian and Catholic families. How do second-generation Indian Americans perceive themselves? As Indians? Indian-Americans? Americans?

The process of forming an identity is not a linear one. It takes a variety of forms and directions, at times even contradictory ones, and passes through numerous stages. For Indian Americans, the process has added difficulties and challenges due to the very nature of the culture and society from which their parents come.

Significance of Study

The significance of the present study is the knowledge it provides by identifying the most salient factors in the process of Indian American ethnic identity development. This information will help the academic community and the Indian American community better understand 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans. This information will benefit educators, counselors and policy-makers better understand the experiences of 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans.

This research has applicability beyond the Indian American experience, however, and the analysis may also offer lessons for rethinking other models. In addition, this study's focus on religion offers an important new window of analysis applicable to many other recent immigrant and second-generation populations, such as Latinos, Blacks and other Asian communities, in the United States. This study contributes to Educational Psychology, Multicultural Education and to the growing field of Asian American Studies. For more information you may contact the researcher at: *khyati_joshi@alum.emory.edu*.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The study of ethnic identity development, particularly as it relates to second generation Indian Americans, lies at the intersection of many disciplines of academic inquiry. For the purposes of this study, the following are the bodies of literature the various analytical approaches of which I provide a broad overview in this chapter: ethnic identity, including social identity development models, social identity theory, and identity formation; oppression theory and the role of religion; social identity theory; social identity development models; second-generation experiences of "meltable" ethnics; and literature relating specifically to the experiences of second-generation Indian Americans.

This chapter surveys relevant research in the following bodies of literature:

I. Oppression Theory

II. Ethnic Identity

   a. Social Identity Development Models and Racial Identity Development Models

   b. Social Identity theories

   c. Identity Formation: a stage approach based on ego identity

III. Socio-historical Context of the Post-1965 Indian Immigrant Generation, as it applies to the second generation

IV. The Second Generation

   a. Americanization and factors affecting ethnic identity development

   b. Second generation Indian Americans

V. Race and Racism specifically focusing on Indian American Community

VI. Definitions

Oppression Theory

I begin by discussing oppression because it is one of the overlying concepts most useful in framing my work. An oppression framework is particularly important for researchers attempting to understanding the discrimination experienced by second-generation Indian Americans, because prejudice and discrimination manifest themselves through multiple forms of oppression. Indian Americans are members of both racial and religious target groups. Most Indian Americans are regarded as members of a visible racial and ethnic group that carries with it a presumed religious identity. Therefore, Indian Americans may face discrimination for being persons of color and for being members of a non-Christian faith (Young, 1990). Young's *Five Faces of Oppression* framework helps us see the double – or even triple – layers of oppression Indian Americans may face. Indian Americans may experience marginalization, exploitation, cultural imperialism, powerlessness and even violence on the basis of race and/or religion. Because of the complicated realities of oppression in the U.S., it is important to recall when and how a target group entered into U.S. society, and to understand immigration in terms of worldwide social, political, and economic conditions when analyzing interactions between "dominant" and "minority" groups. Scholars have pointed out that a homogenizing racial and ethnic categorization came to be used in the Unites States "to distinguish groups in relation to a White majority (Lott, 1998). Thus

the conflation of ethnicity with "otherness" emerges as a factor affecting Indian immigrants and the second generation.

Ethnic Identity

The definition of *ethnic identity* is broad and varied (Rotheram and Phinney, 1987; Phinney 1990; Helms, 1995; Rumbaut 1994). Scholars across disciplines agree that ethnic identity is largely defined by context (Hurtado, Gurin, & Peng, 1997; Hurtado, Rodriguez, Gurin, & Beals, 1993; Phinney, 1990; Tajfel, 1981, Berry, 1993, Helms, 1995). Furthermore, ethnic identity is not a necessarily a linear construct and can be conceptualized as a range of qualitatively different ways of relating to one's own group and other groups (Gans, 1979; Gans, 1992; Phinney, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996a; Portes & Zhou, 1994; Rumbaut, 1996; Sodowsky, Kwong-Liem, & Pannu, 1995).

Ethnic identity is multidimensional (Phinney, 1990; Sodowky, 1991; Bernal, Knight et al, 1993; Aboud and Doyle, 1993), and is affected by a multitude of variables including feelings, attitudes, knowledge and behaviors related to ethnicity. Scholars categorize these variables in numerous ways. For example, Bernal and Knight (1993) describe the first dimension as self-identification; the second dimension as knowledge about ethnic culture, referring to traditions, customs, values and behaviors; and the third dimension as positive and negative attitudes toward one's own ethnic group (ethnic pride versus hatred toward one's ethnic group) as shaped by the preferences, feelings, and values that people have about their ethnic group membership and culture.

Isajiw (1990) organizes his framework of ethnic identity differently: where Bernal and Knight (1993) describe ethnic identity as multidimensional, Isajiw characterizes ethnic identity as two dimensional, using the terms "external" and the "internal" to refer

to the interaction of the psychological and the social (Isajiw, 1990). For Isajiw, external ethnic identity refers to observable social and cultural behaviors which are manifested in the areas of ethnic language, ethnic group friendship, participation in ethnic group functions and activities, ethnic media, and ethnic traditions. Internal ethnic identity is made up of the cognitive, moral, and affective dimensions of one's ethnic self. The cognitive dimension refers to the ethnic person's (a) self image and images of his or her ethnic group, (b) knowledge of the ethnic group's heritage and historical past, and (c) knowledge of the ethnic group's values. The moral dimension refers the individual's "feeling of group obligation" (Isajiw, 1990, p. 36). The affective dimension refers to an ethnic individual's feelings of attachment to his or her own ethnic group.

Attitudes and behaviors related to ethnic identity continually change and develop as issues are encountered within the ethnic group or through interaction with the dominant culture. Viewing identity in a bi-directional or circular manner, it is possible to have more than one stated identity. One can have a multiethnic identity or even a transnational identity, which can be very helpful for bicultural people. The literature aforementioned, as well as ethnic identity development models (Phinney, 1990) and racial identity development models (Cross, 1991; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Kim, 1981), do not consider ethnicity to be situational. However, Maira (1998) and Root (2000) do show how individuals exhibit situational ethnicity. It is interesting to note that what Root (2000) identifies as "situational ethnicity" has been referred to in the work of Phinney (1989) as "*confused* identity." The salience of an individual's ethnic identity is affected by the opportunity to express it. Royce argues that one must be able to affirm and reaffirm an identity in order to hold it (Royce, 1982).

Social Identity and Racial Identity Development Models

Although my focus is on ethnic identity development, a brief overview of key racial identity development models (Hardiman, 1997; Cross, 1991; Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; Kim, 1981) is also provided here; familiarity with these models is helpful because often the ethnic and racial experiences of Indian Americans overlap. "We cannot understand the state of ethnic groups in the present without understanding the historical processes that made racial objects out of ethnic subjects" (Pierce, 2001; p. 223). Social identity and racial identity development models are useful in understanding the experiences of second generation Indian Americans precisely because they look at identity formation for targeted groups in a larger social system that is hierarchically characterized by inequality and oppression. Both Hardiman and Jackson (1997) and Cross (1991) discuss Black identity development in the context of American racism, where the experience of black people has been systematically devalued. These scholars describe an identity process that occurs within the context of American racism. Kim's (1981) study on Asian Americans uses the social identity development paradigm to think about an experience that is different from that of African Americans. Although she characterizes this as an "Asian American" model, she is really focused almost exclusively on the experiences of Japanese Americans. Kim's work shows how ethnic identity development may parallel racial identity development *in some cases*.

Most of the research tradition on "minority youth," which traditionally has been carried out among African Americans, with some studies including Chicanos and Puerto Ricans as well, has only limited applicability to understanding today's second generation youth, particularly Asians and others who do not come with a heavy burden of negative

racist stereotypes. The contest between the capacity of American culture to create new ethnic identities and the capacity of immigrant communities to preserve or recreate their own self-images can be the source of important social and psychological conflicts (Portes & MacLeod, 1996).

Nevertheless, the racial identity development literature is useful in conceptualizing the identity-development processes and the identity outcomes described by research participants in the present study. There are two basic approaches worth discussing here: Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) paradigm and the Cross (1991) and Cross and Phagen-Smith (2001) paradigm. The social identity development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997) is a "generic" model of racial identity development that can be applied to other social identities such as gender and sexual orientation. The manner in which it conceptualizes identity development grows out of the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and the African American movement that arose therefrom. Hardiman and Jackson examine racial identity development and conceptualize it as "black and white" identity development in the context of the dynamics of oppression. Their basic stages have to do with the acceptance of racism and the processes by which the targets (that is, Blacks) and agents (Whites) come to resist the norms. The identity development process in this model arises from the struggle to redefine one's identity.

Jean Kim's model of Asian American racial identity development emerges from the social identity development model. Kim examined the process by which Asian Americans resolve their identity conflict, which is characterized by being Americans of Asian ancestry living in a predominantly White society. Kim identified an *ethnic awareness* stage in the experiences of her research sample. *Ethnic awareness* refers the

product of experiences her subjects had through early interactions with family and relatives up until the point when the subjects began attending school. This component is the early family socialization component – the ethnic awareness that developed prior to going to school and accepting the White norm and becoming Americanized. Kim's model offered me one lens through which to look at my research participants and the childhood experiences they described.

The second branch of the racial identity development model that is part of the conceptual framework for my study is the work of Bill Cross. Cross' work is useful for my purposes because he embeds the process of Blacks' identity development in a larger Eriksonian lifespan process. Cross' lifespan perspective (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001) was helpful in that it can now be applied, at least in some respects, to the Indian American experience. Noticing that one's identity can be shaped in ways other than just through the "conversion experience" makes the work more relevant to the Indian American ethnic identity development experience. Not all Black people place race and Black culture at the center of their identity (Cross & Phagen-Smith, 1996). Cross and Phagen-Smith (1996) acknowledge that not all youth enter adolescence with a heavy emphasis on Blackness (race and Black culture). The original "Nigrescence" theory defined the study of adult identity conversions in Black Americans. Rather than remain limited to conversion experiences, in the more recent works, Cross and Phagen-Smith (2001) present a perspective more analogous to the "life span" schema discussed above.

Some aspects of Phinney's work are relevant to the Indian American experience. Phinney (1990, 1996) conflates all of these racial and ethnic identity processes with adolescents, whereas Cross says that there are a specific set of opportunities for racial

identity development that occurs in adolescence but they are different processes. Phinney (1990) views the process of ethnic identity development as a progression through four separate phases: diffuse, where ethnic identity has not yet been explored; foreclosure, where commitment is based on parental values and not made independently; moratorium, where the individual explores his or her ethnic identity, but is not yet settled or committed to "one" identity; and achieved, where the individual has explored his or her identity and reached a firm commitment. Although the studies by Phinney and her colleagues (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996) are prominent in the psychological literature on adolescent ethnic identity development, they do not adequately explore specific cultural, political, or historical factors for the "unmeltable" ethnic groups involved in studies like this one.

Moreover, while stage models of ethnic identity development provide heuristic benefits, they are inappropriate in describing ethnic identity among Asians and Asian-Americans for many reasons. First, stage theories imply that ethnic identity is a final and fixed outcome resulting from a unidirectional progression through certain stages. In fact, ethnic identity is neither an "all-or-nothing" concept nor a static phenomenon. Ethnic identity is multi-faceted and evolving (Maira, 1998; Phinney, 1990; Root, 2000; Spickard & Burroughs, 2000). Just as culture is dynamic and ever-changing (Nieto, 2000), ethnic identity is not contingent on or a product of a particular linear progression. Ethnic identity in Asian Americans is strongly influenced by social context (Hurtado et al., 1997). The current racial identity development models do not take into account some of the factors affecting bicultural socialization affecting second-generation Indian Americans (Ibrahim, Oknishi, & Sandhu, 1997; Root, 2000).

For the purposes of this dissertation, I am not interested in the nuances of these developmental models. Instead, these social developmental models and the racial identity development models discussed above provide a language and some concepts that are helpful in discussing the identity cluster data in Chapter 8, where I interpret my research participants' life experiences and perspectives and suggest some future directions for this research.

Social Identity Theories

Both social identity theory and social identity development deal with the emerging identities of targeted groups who experience oppression at the same time they are valuing their own culture and living with the fact that their culture is not valued by the dominant culture.[4] Social identity theorists place ethnic identity in the larger context of the psychological processes of individual identity development. They assert that ethnic identity (a) is influenced by the social context, and (b) may be related to and affected by non-ethnic categories such as occupation, family, race, religion and language (Hurtado et al., 1993). Social identity theory tells us that ethnic identity is influenced by the social context and that the ethnic individual develops an identity in relation to and based on "input" both from a person's own group and from the countergroup. Identity may result not only from the self in terms of personal qualities but also from the psychological processes chosen by the individual and/or prescribed by an ethnic system (Hoare, 1991). Social Identity theorists suggest that minority peoples feel themselves bound together by race, nationality, religion, culture, common history, common fate, and

[4] Coping, for example, with social categorization and social comparison, but nevertheless developing a positive self-image despite having been negatively categorized or compared.

similar experiences of discrimination and social advantage, all of which serve to strengthen in-group solidarity and to enhance consciousness of their minority membership (Hutnik, 1985; Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

In addition to this context phenomenon, Tajfel (1978) stressed that the ethnic individual develops an identity not only from interactions with and an understanding of how his or her own group perceives itself, but also from such interactions and understandings about the "countergroup" (Tajfel, 1978). One's identity as member of a target group is most likely to become a social identity, the result of "blocked opportunity or conflicts or critical incidences"(Hurtado et al., 1997). Tajfel argues the formation of social identities is the consequence of three social psychological processes: (1) social categorization, (2) social comparison, and (3) psychological work. According to Tajfel psychological processes affect both the content and structure of social identities. Social identity theory and social categorization theory emphasize the overriding function of social identities is the process of categorizing oneself as an in-group member and others as outgroup members – a process which itself creates and maintains attitudinal and behavioral distinctions favoring the in-group (Stephan and Stephan, 2000).

The research of Hurtado et al (1997) on immigrant and second-generation Mexican Americans provides data that can be extrapolated to today's Indian immigrants and second generation. Hurtado et al argue that social identities serve as "mediators" of cultural adaptation and are in large part the product of historical and structural influences on the identity of Mexican immigrants and their progeny. The social identities of second-generation members of this cohort reflect affiliations based on their ethnic group's history as well as their current contact with groups in the U.S. The results further demonstrate the

importance of a multidimensional concept of social identities – that is, thinking about ethnic identity as more than merely an identification with one's own or one's parents' nationality.. The social identity labels used by the immigrant and second generation may be the same, yet the identities are configured differently and have different meanings. This phenomenon was found to have occurred among some research participants in the present study, as I shall discuss at length in Chapter Eight.

Socio-Historical Context: Characteristics and Experiences of the Post-1965 Indian Immigrant Generation as They Apply to Second-Generation Indian Americans

In order to examine the ethnic identity development process in second generation Indian Americans, it is important to know something about their parents and their community. Each successive generation provides the potential for new manifestations of ethnic identification – manifestations that build upon the psycho-historical experiences of their predecessors (Alvarez in (p. 248) Hurtado et al, 1994). Ethnicity is constructed differently for immigrant and second generation (Hurtado et al, 1994, p. 263). In a previous manuscript I explored the history of Indian immigration to the United States and the demographic changes that have occurred over the course of 35 years of Indian immigration. I considered changes and continuity with regard to class status, religious and linguistic affiliation, geographic origin in India, and caste, and how they related to community formation and the family – factors which are strong identifying points for Indian immigrants (Joshi, 1998). All of the factors contirbuted to how and why Indian immigrants created a world for themselves in the U.S. I am not exploring the sociological phenomena of family, culture, and community in this section; rather, I present a brief review of the literature merely to familiarize the reader with the things that are important

if one is to contextualize the experience of the second-generation lives in light of the immigrant experience.

For the most part, the parents of today's second-generation cohort arrived in the U.S. after 1965, once the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 lifted the ban on Asian immigration that had been imposed by Congress in the National Origins Act of 1924, which more than doubled the number of Indians admitted to the U.S. since 1870, the first year of Indian immigration to the U.S. was documented (Steinberg, 1989). Initially, the post-1965 Indian immigrants settled in heavily urban areas such as New York, Chicago, and northern and central New Jersey. The majority of these immigrants were of either professionals or the technically skilled – white collar workers who immigrated with or soon sent for their families ([Steinberg, 1989; Jensen, 1988; Chandrasekhar, 1982; Takaki, 1989). The immigrant generation's educational and socioeconomic background is very critical because it helped support the development of the "model minority myth" among Asians ([Takaki, 1989; Prashad, 2000; Wang & Wu, 1996).

In light of the literature examined in a previous manuscript, what is relevant for this study is how the Indian immigrant generation transmitted "Indian culture" to the second-generation. The literature indicates that most Indian immigrants feel that preservation of their culture is of the utmost importance and feel a sense of obligation to pass culture along to the children. This goal is best achieved, the parents believe, by joining Indian organizations, participating in religious activities, socializing with other Indians, and traveling to India. In the works that discuss these phenomena, when conflict between generations is addressed, the focus is more on the parental concern over the

child's success rather than on questions of identity that many second-generation Indian Americans face growing up in the U.S. The literature also focuses on the ultimate acquiescence of the youth to follow family set plans (Saran, 1987), Gibson).

Some studies (Bacon, 1996; Fisher, 1980;Agarwal, 1991; Lessinger, 1994) discuss issues facing Indian American families by addressing intergenerational questions rather than by discussing the history of Indian immigration and lifestyles of Indian immigrants. Other studies have focused on specific factors of the interpersonal conflicts: language (Sridhar, 1988), family values (Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Dasgupta, 1992), religion, (Fenton, 1988; Williams, 1988), caste identity (Subramaniam, 1978), food (Gupta, 1975), dress, cultural events and festivals, or the arts (music, dance, movies) and participation in ethnic organizations (Dasgupta, 1989; Fenton, 1988; Fisher, 1980;Kurian &; Srivastava, 1983).

Helweg and Helweg (1990) show that the desire to maintain a distinct ethnic and cultural identity is strong in the first generation, and that this generation attempted to do so by constructing social networks, formal and informal, which played a key role in the lives Indian immigrants and their children. Organizations are example of formal networks. Initially organizations were formed at the "Pan-Indian" level. As the Indian populations increased in the U.S. organizations were created on the basis of region, caste and language (Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Ramesh, 1998; Williams, 1988). Networks of communities aided in the transmission culture from the immigrant parents to the second-generation children. Indian immigrant parents are especially apprehensive about what they perceive to be corrupting aspects of American culture, such as crime, violence, drug use, divorce and sexual promiscuity. Indians in America created communities not only to

provide a "cultural space" for their children, but also to guard against the evils outside that space (Bacon 1996).[5]

The creation and re-creation of family and community networks help maintain an ethnic identity and impact ethnic identity development (Park, 1999). There are different levels of ethnic attachment at different stages of life (Hong, 1999). The conceptions of family life and friendship and how the second-generation portrays and interprets their experiences of growing up as children of immigrants and immigrants themselves (Thai, 1999) affect ethnic identity development. Kibria (1999) and Kim and Min (1999) address how culture, community and language affect identity development of other second-generation Asian American sub-ethnic groups.

Religion had a vital role in the maintenance of ethnic ties among the immigrant groups who arrived after 1965, particularly South Asian immigrant populations (Fenton, 1988; Bacon, 1996; Williams, 1992). Ritual, belief and religious structures have served as important interpretative frames, addressing the hardships of immigration and oppressive conditions in the U.S. (Yoo, 1996). Indian immigrants have brought Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrian belief systems with them. Religion has a major effect on immigrant because it provides a connection to back home; rituals and traditions of the religion help maintain culture while adapting the new life in the United States. The immigrant parents transmitted only a particular type of culture and traditions: those that they are familiar with as a result of their own childhood,

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[5] Assimilation of an ethnic group is seen as commitment to the host country. Indian immigrant often resist these commitments and adopt dual identities, one that is public or American so as to be accepted into mainstream society and the other that is private or oriented to the Indians and not to be compromised with American values.

adolescent and young-adult experiences growing up within their particular geographic region, faith tradition, caste or socioeconomic class in India.

There is a link between religion and ethnicity (Smith, 1981). Religion is a key factor for the retention of cultural identity in the Hindu diaspora (Pearson, 1996). Just as social services and places of ethnic solidarity help in transition to life in the U.S., so for the Indian community the establishment of gurudwaras, mosques and Hindu temples, schools, and institutes in U.S. represent the valiant attempts of immigrants to preserve their identity and shape that of their children (Kurien, 1998).

The Second Generation

Many scholars have called attention to the salience of ethnicity for second-generation "unmeltables" – including the post-1965, second-generation cohort examined in this study. Portes and his colleagues have focused on school-age children (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996a; Rumbaut, 1996; Zhou, 1997). In the last few years, there have been an increasing number of studies on second-generation Asian Americans, Blacks and Latinos. Most of this research focuses on second-generation college students, a relatively accessible research sample. (Chong, 1998; Hong, 1999; Jensen & Chitose, 1996; Kibria, 1999; Leong, 1999; Min, 1999; Mittelberg & Waters, 1992; Mukhi, 1996; Park, 1999; Perlmann, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996a; Rumbaut, 1996; Tee, 1997; Thai, 1999; Truong, 2000; Waters, 1994; Yang, 1999; Zhou, 1999).

Americanization

No cultures or traditions can be moved from one social location to another without dramatic changes in the process of adaptation. For Indian immigrants to the

United States this involves *Americanization*: cultural adaptation, maintenance of the home culture, assimilation and acculturation. All of the processes can occur at different stages in the lives of immigrants. (Zhou, 1997). *Americanization* refers to the socialization process of 1.5- and second generation and their adaptation to life in the United States.[6] In contemporary literature, *Americanization* refers specifically to immigrant communities of color and their children (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996a; Zhou, 1997). This socialization and adaptation process is also referred to as *assimilation* (Gibson, 1988) or *acculturation* (Berry, 1993; Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991). Distinctions between these terms are neither clear nor consistent; commonalties exist among the various theories.

The major students of European assimilation and its discontents in American life – such as Gordon (1964), Alba (1985) and Steinberg (1989) – all emphasized the disjunction between the typical Euro-American experience and that of racially distinct groups, by which they principally meant African Americans, but tangentially included Asians and Latinos as well. Alba and Nee (1997) are skeptical about the significance of non-Whiteness as a barrier to assimilation; they discuss evidence showing that Asian immigrant groups today demonstrate cultural and economic assimilation more rapid than Europeans a century ago, and their rates of social assimilation more closely approximate the European experience than the exclusion that faced all non-Whites fifty years ago. Portes (1995) argues, with his "segmented assimilation" theory, that unlike previous waves of immigration earlier in this century – in which subsequent generations of the White, European immigrants assimilated rapidly into the White "American" culture and

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[6] This process also applies to immigrants; however, they are not the focus of this study.

experienced upward social and economic mobility – while some ethnic minority immigrant groups are experiencing traditional upward mobility, others, appear more vulnerable to "downward assimilation."

Several scholars concur with Portes' segmented assimilation theory in that Americanization is not a linear process, where one moves on the spectrum from retainment of original ethnicity to complete assimilation. These scholars instead describe Americanization as a set of bi-directional segments: assimilation, accommodation, cultural marginalization and bicultural maintenance. (Bahri & Vasudeva, 1996; Knight et al., 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996b; Sodowsky et al., 1995). These multiple segments are also inconsistently defined in the different academic disciplines. The following definitions will be utilized in my study.

- **Assimilation** – the process of *losing* cultural habits, norms and language patterns from one's ethnic group of origin and replacing them with those of the dominant group.
- **Cultural Marginalization** – the process of becoming alienated from both the ethnic culture of origin and dominant culture.
- **Bicultural Maintenance** – the process by which an individual synthesizes the values, behaviors and attitudes of the mainstream society with those of the ethnic culture of origin.
- **Accommodation** – the process by which an individual accepts subordinate specific cultural practices to accommodate the dominant group, while maintaining his/her cultural identity.

Portes' research on Cuban and South American immigrants show that today's immigrant populations are experiencing "segmented assimilation" due, in part, to the socio-political and economic context into which these groups are arriving. While some ethnic minority immigrant groups are experiencing traditional upward mobility, others appear more vulnerable to "downward assimilation." Portes (1995: 72) attributes the differences in the socio-cultural adaptations of the different groups to three primary factors, of which the first two apply directly to the particular generational cohort discussed in this dissertation. According to Portes, these factors are:

- **Racism**: the color of one's skin, in a nation that historically discriminates against people of color and resists their assimilation into the mainstream;
- **Marginality**: the particular community in which youth are raised (e.g., in urban areas in particular second-generation youth are prone to sustained exposure to "the adversarial subculture developed by marginalized native youths to cope with their own difficult situation"); and
- **The new post-industrial "hourglass" economy**, in which there are abundant low-skilled, low-wage jobs, and a fair amount of high-paying jobs that require an elite education, but fewer and fewer of the working-class jobs that used to provide a ladder to upward mobility for immigrant populations.

The presence of the post –1965 Indian immigrant generation has shaped the post-industrial "hourglass" society. People of Indian descent are experiencing the Americanization process in a different way than described by many of the acculturation or assimilation models based on the immigration patterns of the early 20th Century (Alba & Nee, 1997; Barkan, 1995). Some scholars have examined the process of adapting to

life in America from a psycho-social perspective (Sodowsky, & Carey, 1987; Das and Kemp, 1997). Greater emphasis on immigrant groups' struggle to maintain their cultural heritage and traditional values while trying to gain structural assimilation into American society creates new conflicts. Not all cultural differences are accepted and treated equally. As their parents and they themselves pursue this goal, children often feel they do not fit in with either culture (Sodowsky, Kwong-Liem, & Pannu, 1995; Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991; Pettys, 1998).

Factors Affecting Americanization

Most parents try to inculcate ethnic pride and awareness of their cultural heritage in their children. The literature suggests for young school age children, this sometimes poses a problem. Rodriguez (1982) described "standing out" because of his physical appearance and frequently being teased or rejected by other children for that difference (Rodriguez, 1982). During their K-12 years, research participants had an array of experienced involving race and racism — experienced that ranged from emotionally neutral to profoundly negative and hurtful. For some the experience was one of marginalization – for example, facing the notion that as someone different from the American racial majority, one is always a "foreigner" (Lee, 1998a). Based on the research of other racial minority groups, preadolescents may show the early signs of a youthful but damaged self-concept that reflects in part the internalized racism (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Thompson, 1996; Atkinson, Morten and Sue, 1993). Most young children, and many older children as well, lack the inner resources to deal with such hostility and to base their self-esteem on their ethnic heritage. The children encounter psychological stress resulting from ridicule by other children because of language, dress,

one's name and other cultural difference (Joshi, 2001; Ooka Pang, 1992; Spring, 2000). They want to be like everyone else so they can fit in with the crowd and shed any cultural traits that set them apart (Das & Kemp, 1997). A large part of the minority child's ethnic identity development entails dealing with this sense of initial rejection of one's ethnic group. Scholars have also shown validation of children's ethnic/cultural identity in school leads to their taking pride in their home culture and heritage (Olsen, 1997; Igoa, 1999; Nieto, 1998).

Ethnic identity is particularly salient to these children of immigrants (Lopez, 1997). The use of racial and ethnic concepts to include or exclude others is often coupled with the use of these concepts to describe and define oneself. For most children, racial and/or ethnic identity is an important aspect of themselves, and they demonstrate this in insightful way (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996). As Rumbaut (1996) has shown, coming to grips with discrimination and prejudice can be much more psychologically damaging to adolescents than for adults. The degree of damage depends on individual factors, strength of family and community networks. (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).

Many second-generation students' school experiences involve continuously measuring and judging their own behavior and that of their peers through a lens of how American one is; here, "American" is synonymous with "White" and "English-speaking." To be American is to be White-skinned (Olsen, 1997). And simultaneously, to be American is to cease wearing styles from other nations and cultures (Olsen, 1997). The process of fitting into a dominant culture is a complex one. Adolescence is typically a time of identity confusion and shift, along the dimensions of ethnicity, gender and social status. Several scholars have shown that another way the children of immigrants resolve

the conflict they feel between pride and their ethnic culture is to deny the importance of their ethnic culture in the school setting. At home the culture may remain vital if they wish to maintain close relationships with family members. At school, their culture becomes unimportant and superfluous (Nieto, 2000; Olsen, 1997; Gibson, 1988).

Accounting for the factors discussed above, scholars consider language to be one of the most salient aspects of ethnic identity (Lopez, 1997; Waters, 1990).[7] Language is one part of the larger set of social experiences that individuals encounter as they grow older and in the process of ethnic identity development (Heller, 1987). Language is considered a major aspect of ethnic identity because it incorporates not only a physical reality, but an emotional reality as well (Nieto, 2000; Olsen, 1997; Rutledge, 1985). A national study directed by linguist Lily Wong Fillmore documented widespread patterns of language loss among first-generation immigrant youth. As they become English speakers, they abandon their home language. Most immigrant families do not consider this possibility, and note too late that the loss has occurred. Some immigrant communities do provide their own mechanisms for maintaining the home language and culture (Olsen, 1997). The literature reveals that regardless of birthplace most children of immigrants to the United States begin life speaking their ethnic mother tongue, but then progressively adopt English and loose their propensity and ability to speak the language of their parents (Portes and Hao, 1998; Lopez, 1996). Parents attempt not only to ensure language retention through the "Saturday" and "Sunday" language classes, but also to transmit customs, norms and morals to the second generation (Maira, 1998; Yang, 1999).

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[7] Waters (1990) considers language to be the most salient aspect of an ethnic community. (Waters refers to ethnic communities as "subcultures.")

As I discuss at length in Chapters Six and Eight, religion is a uniquely salient factor in the ethnic identity development process of second-generation Indian Americans. Unfortunately, despite a rich body of literature on the role of religion in immigrant communities, there has been relatively little attention paid to the role and impact of religion on second-generation ethnic identity development (Chong, 1998). For example, Lowe (1996) groups together "testimony, personal narratives, oral history, literature, film, visual arts, and other cultural forms as sites through which subject, community and struggle are stratified and mediated." To be sure, these factors are "crucial to the imagination and rearticulation of new forms of political subjectivity, collectivity, and practice" (Lowe, 1991, p. 158.), but Lowe fails to include prayer and worship – religion – as a mode of cultural expression. Recently scholars have acknowledged Erikson's emphasis on the importance of religion to identity formation (Fulton, 1997). Research on religion and post-1965 immigrant communities of color in the U.S. demonstrate that religious identity is an important and accepted way of being different and it is a force that shapes, transforms, unifies and divides ethnic religious communities (Ibrahim et al., 1997). Thus religion becomes an expression of cultural identity, a "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans, 1979) as well as a vehicle for devotional expression (Leonard, 1997; Fenton, 1988; Kurien, 1998; Williams, 1992; Eck, 1996; George, 1998; Khaldi, 1991).

Although so far the evidence of what is happening to the second generation is mostly anecdotal – such as *A Magazine*'s article "Islamic Revival: More and More South Asian Americans are Finding Their Identities by Not Losing Their Religion"(Ahmed, 2000) and other sources (Tallapragada, 1994) – a few empirical studies show the importance of religion in second-generation identities. Fenton (1988) questioned the second generation

in an attempt to understand (a) how effectively rituals and traditions had been transmitted to them, and (b) whether immigrants' children were likely to perpetuate the religious traditions passed down by their parents and family members. In Phinney and Alipuria's (1990) study of American-born high school and college students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the minority students rated ethnicity equal in importance to religion in their self-definition. For example, Suleiman (1997) describes the effects of anti-Muslim stereotypes and notes that often Muslim children do not have information to counter the anti-Muslim stereotypes rampant in the American media.

Religion is a more legitimate basis for social grouping and group-formation (*Cf.* Weber, 1958; Mcquire, 1994) than is culture. Religion is often perceived as a more authentic basis for group identity than ethnic culture; this belief is similar to the responses of second-generation Indian Americans in Maira's (1998) study. Second-generation youth observe parents and relatives performing rituals and practicing one's faith. They sometimes perceive themselves as not religious if they do not follow the traditions in that particular way (Peeradina, 1996; Radhakrishnan, 1994).

Hutnik (1985) found that for South Asians in Great Britain, religion (Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh) was the major factor for the youths asserting their distinctiveness. Saeed, Blain, and Forbes' (1999) study on the preferred identities of young Pakistani-Scots in west-central Scotland found that the youth preferred to adopt religious, ethnic and nationality labels. All the respondents who stated that they were Scottish or British also registered ethnic and religious statements, which showed the tendency of the respondents to combine "indigenous" self-attributes along with cultural affirmations specific to their ethnicity.

Second-Generation Indian Americans

Up until this point I have discussed the literature that will shape this dissertation's analysis of research participants' experiences as they reflect concepts like ethnicity, identity development, and Americanization. Now I will focus on the small yet growing body of literature on the second-generation Indian Americans in various academic disciplines that deal with ethnic identity on a variety of levels. Studies of the second generation are few at best (Agarwal, 1991; Bacon, 1996; Gibson, 1987; Gibson, 1988; Leonard, 1997; Maira, 1998).

The first body of literature deals with the lives of Indian Americans from a predominantly sociological (Bacon, 1996; Saran, 1987; Coelho, 1986) and anthropological (Gibson, 1988) perspective. These studies, which took place in the 1980's and early 1990's, examine intergenerational conflict and how children of immigrants, the 1.5 and second generation were living in a bimodal (east and west) world. Other scholars have discussed factors involved in the Americanization process for second generation Indian Americans living between the "two worlds" of eastern culture and western culture (Ibrahim, 1997; Kar, 1995; Sodowsky, 1995; Das, 1997; Lessinger, 1994); or the role of families and other social networks in the lives of second-generation young people (Agarwal, 1991; Helweg & Helweg, 1990; Nanji,).

Gibson (1987) was one of the first to study school-age Indian American children. Lessinger's study (1995) argues that children of the Indian immigrants are socialized into two cultures: the culture of the family and the culture of the larger American society. Several ethnographic studies document the nature of this population's pre-college home and school experiences. These studies documented and analyzed the socialization

experiences of this population within the home and ethnic community, such as the intergenerational conflicts with culture and community. However, each lacked research and analysis on the socialization factors outside of the home, such as the school setting and the news and popular media.

In the last five to seven years, a body of literature has emerged that challenges the reproduced "monolithic construction," the essentialist frame which circumscribed much of the scholarly work on Indian Americans a decade ago. Maira and Srikanth's *Contours of the Heart* (1996), an anthology of academic and creative writing, focused on the various dynamics of identity development among the South Asian diasporic population, including second generation Indian Americans. Scholars have started examining Indian Americans' "location" on the U.S racial "map." Where does the outside world think they fit and where do they see themselves? One the matters complicating the situation is the persisting confusion and ambivalence over racial identification by Indian Americans and racial categorization by the larger American society (Agarwal, 1991; Leonard, 1997), (Kibria, 1998) (*Maira and Srikanth,* 1997)(Prashad, 2000). Shankar and Srikanth's (1997) *A Part, Yet Apart* argues the importance of questioning social, political and economic inclusion and exclusion (which are relevant to multicultural diversity models of the nation) and focuses on issues such as naming and identity, on the importance of analysis of race, on political activism, and on the use of the concept of *diaspora* in the analysis of South Asians in the United States.

Race and Racism

The social and historical construction of the meaning of race in the U.S. is full of ambiguity [Omi, 1994; Espiritu, 1992; Lowe, 1996). It is a product of American history; the processes of racial identity formation we encounter today are present-day outcomes of an historical evolution. Immigrants are not necessarily aware of America's racial legacies and will not immediately understand our current racial reality (Omi, 1994).[8] Race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. It is exactly these social conflicts experienced by Indian Americans with interactions with members of the dominant culture that result in a different type of racism than the racism experienced by Blacks. Race is a matter of both social structure and cultural representation (Omi, 1994). A racial project is one that links the structure and representation. When meaning is attached to race and the link is made to something else. A racial project can be defined as racist if and only if it creates or reproduces structure of domination based on essentialist categories of race. Such a link might be revealed in efforts to protect dominant interests (Omi and Winant, 1997).

In order to understand how racial formations affect Indian Americans, we have to step back and examine the fundamental dynamic of the U.S. racial system which is the dichotomous scheme of White and non-White based loosely on skin color (Lee, 1994; Root, 1996). Kibria (1998) and others have attempted to figure out where Indian Americans (South Asian Americans) fit in the racial schema of the United States. The

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[8] Unfortunately discrimination is part of the social fabric of the United States. The Americanization process is further complicated by discrimination. Ethnic self-awareness, salience of ethnicity and ethnic group boundaries heighten when there is "contextual dissonance" for the individual and even more so when the individual faces discrimination on the basis of having a different social identity (Rumbaut, 1996).

racial ambiguity of South Asians does not then stem from the question of whether they are White or non-White; clearly, Indian Americans are *not* Whites. But this conclusion alone does not answer the question of who exactly they *are* as non-Whites (Kibria, 1998) (Espiritu, 1992; Lott, 1998). For example, although the South Asians were "scientifically" classified as "Caucasians" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the U.S. courts found them to be "non-White" in popular U.S. understanding and thus ineligible for the privileges of White status, such as citizenship and the right to own land (Chan, 1991; Takaki, 1989; Prashad, 2000).

U.S. racial thinking is also characterized by an understanding of race as "pure" and thus easily divided into a limited series of mutually exclusive categories (Omi and Winant, 1997; Kibria, 1998). Kibria aptly points out Indian Americans do not fit well into any of the these categories, yet they like everyone else encounter a social dynamic that insists on pigeonholing people into "a race." As a result, Indian Americans as South Asian Americans are marginalized (Shankar & Srikanth, 1998).

Like other minority groups in the United States, Indian Americans view issues of identity in ways that are influenced not only by the United States' racial schema but also by conceptions of race that are carried or transmitted from their countries of origin. Race is a matter of social structure and cultural representation (Omi and Winant, 1997). Scholars tend to agree that Indian immigrants and their children are part of transnational communities – maintaining active relations between multiple countries of origin and settlement – and thus that the influence of these "native" conceptions of race may be particularly sharp for them. Transnational Indian Americans bring with them notions of colonialism, imperialism and a different conception of skin color and race. Fisher (1980)

noticed a lack of consensus among a group of Indian immigrants in New York regarding an appropriate racial designation for the group. The group of Indian immigrants proposed many different terms: such as Aryan, Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Indian, Oriental, Asian and Mongol.

The historical and present-day factors combined with the socioeconomic class factors contribute to different ways that Indian immigrants and the second generation react to race and racism in the U.S. One type of reaction is illustrated by Lessinger (1994) in her study of Indian immigrants in the New York Metropolitan area. She suggests that Indian immigrants raised in India do not understand the concept of race as America defines it, and therefore Indian immigrants may not recognize when they or their children are targets of American-style racism. Moreover, many Indian immigrant parents, because they are educated, affluent and professional, think of themselves as White and deny that they or their children *could* be victimized. (Lessinger, 1994). Kibria and other scholars provide an alternate view on the way Indian immigrants experience race and racism in the U.S. Mazumdar (1989) suggests the native conceptions of race may provide a frame of reference for Indian immigrants which allows them to resist the dominant society's racial thinking(Mazumdar, 1989), and further argues – as does Kibria (1998) – that Indian immigrants perpetuate the group's racial ambiguity because they of their efforts to ignore or bypass the issues of South Asian racial status in the U.S. Kibria notes there was a consistent separation of race from skin color among Indian immigrants, in contrast to U.S. racial thinking, in which skin color is a major indicator of race. Such conceptions of race, which are so different from the principles of U.S. racial thinking, have helped Indian Americans to remain ideologically disengaged from the U.S. racial order. In other

words, confronted with the fact of their non-White ambiguity, Indian Americans can turn to alternative conceptions of race to interpret their identity. Prashad suggest many Indian Americans actively disengage themselves from the "discussion" (Prashad, 2000).

The way that the Indian immigrant community has dealt with race certainly influences the outlook and perception of race and racism of the second generation. The Indian American community, immigrants and second generations have faced individual, societal and institutional discrimination, such as the "Dot-Busters" incident in New Jersey (DiStephano, 1991). Omi and Winant (1997) suggest that race should be seen as dimension of human representation rather than an illusion within it. Race here, as an element of social structure, carries with it no inherent negative or positive weight, but rather marks the research participant as different from others in U.S. society" (Omi, 1994).

In the immediate aftermath of the 1965 Immigration Act, South Asian immigrants to the U.S. were largely professionals who were sheltered by the privileges of their class status from the most blatant forms of racism against non-Whites in the U.S. Unlike the parents – who due to the regional and state nationalisms subscribed to an identity politics arising from regional and national issues in India –second-generation Indian Americans, exposed and socialized in the post-Civil Rights environment, have a heightened consciousness of race. As a result, they find themselves rearticulated into an identity politics that is about taking their place on the racial and socio-political map of the U.S. (Olsen, 1997; Prashad & Matthew, 1999/2000).

Raised and socialized in the U.S., and thus in some ways more American than their parents, Indian American are nevertheless separated from their non-immigrant peers

by the racial identity U.S. society ascribes to them as well as by culture, by a sense of ethnic identity – and by their intense emotional involvement with and loyalty to their families (Lessinger, 1995). Research studies on the second and subsequent generations of the South Asian diaspora indicate racism and prejudice as shaping self-identity factors (Saeed, Blain, & Forbes, 1999). Prashad and Matthew (1999/2000) state that race plays a significant role in the lives of Indian American youth and that their activities show us that they are up to the task of rearticulation of the way in which South Asians have been previously racialized. Maira's (1998) study also touches upon this concept. However, more in-depth research on the second-generation experiences with discrimination is needed to understand how discrimination affects the ethnic identity development process, a question with which earlier studies did adequately grapple. For example, Sodowsky, Lai, and Plake (1991) argued that acculturation experiences of ethnic and immigrant groups influences the Indian American cultural or national identity – but did not account for the impact of racism experienced by the second generation.

Definitions

Throughout this paper, unless otherwise noted, I define terms as follows:

- **Culture** is an ever-changing system of values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldviews created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include shared history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion, and how these are transformed by those who share them (Nieto, 1996).
- **Religion** is both a basis of association and an expression of shared meanings, the importance of which depends largely on the social support of a community

of believers. Religion is "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [people] by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz, 1966).

- **Racism** is the systematic subordination of members of targeted racial groups who have relatively little social power in the United States (Blacks, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans), by members of the agent racial group who have relatively more social power (Whites). This subordination is supported by the actions of individuals, by cultural norms and values, and by the institutional structures and practices of society (Adams et al, 1997).
- **Ethnoreligious Communities** can be thought of groups sharing similar ethnic culture and buttressed by religion. Communities are permeable, religious dimensions blending with ethnic dimensions.
- **Indian American** means an individual of Indian origin who was born in the U.S. or who immigrated to the U.S.
- **Indian immigrant** is an adult socialized and educated in his/her native land who moved to the United States and became a permanent resident.
- **Indian American community** refers collectively to immigrant and second generation Indian Americans.
- **1.5 generation** refers to children who arrived in the U.S. at a young age.[9]

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[9] See footnote 1 and accompanying text, at pages 1-2 above.

- **Second generation** refers to the children of immigrants, born in the United States, who have been educated and socialized in American institutions.[10]
- **Ethnic identity** refers to an individual's sense of belonging to the multidimensional (religion, language and culture) culture of one's ancestral group; it affects one's behavior, attitudes, perceptions and thoughts, while also being shaped by the current social context.
- **Americanization** is the socialization process for Indian Americans. The process is segmented rather than linear. The segments are: assimilation, acculturation, cultural marginalization and bicultural maintenance. See selected literature review section for more information.

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[10] The second generation is sometimes broadened to include foreign-born children arriving at pre-school age (0-4 years) because they share many linguistic, cultural, and developmental experiences similar to those of immigrant offspring. The usage of these generational terms is inconsistent and dependent on the social and historical processes of immigration as well as the specific nationality under study (Zhou, 1997). This issue is discussed at greater length at pages 1-2, above.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will describe each phase of the research process employed in this study. The obstacles were many, and I will note them together with the solutions I discovered at each phase of data collection. The goal of this chapter is to provide enough detail to enable other researchers interested in studying the second-generation Indian American population to replicate and improve upon the methodology used here.

The purpose of my study is to identify and explore the salience of the factors that shape the various trajectories of ethnic identity development in second-generation Indian Americans, and to describe the process by which they do so. This study aims to investigate the ways in which the research participants' interpretation of these factors/experiences informs their sense of an ethnic identity, and how they "identify" as a result of these factors/experiences. I am also interested in the *process* by which the multiple trajectories of ethnic identity development come about. Qualitative methods are well suited for this kind of study because I am trying to understand not merely the "categories" research participants place themselves in but also the nuances of when and how crucial experiences resulted in a negotiation and reformulation of each one's identity. I use open-ended, semi-structured interviewing as the principal data collection technique in my study because it is the most effective for this purpose.

To the qualitative approach I added a quantitative methodology which I call a *Card Rating* system. The Card Rating system was a way to get research participants to isolate certain individual factors and think about their salience. I chose to incorporate

such an inquiry because I was aware that the interview method would generate a great deal of data and a certain amount of fluidity. I was also aware that for triangulation purposes, the presence of quantitative data could provide anchor points for the quantitative data and an interesting check of what my research participants were telling me in the more complex, nuanced interview format. This methodology involved ratings, using a modified Likert scale, of ten predetermined factors based on existing research. This methodology also enabled me to compare factors as ranked by the subject with factors that emerged in the qualitative narratives. This study draws primarily from the qualitative data, using numerical ratings from the quantitative Card Rating data when relevant to my discussion.

Qualitative methods are well suited for generating theory on socio-psychological processes such as those involved in the ethnic identity development of 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans. While time intensive, the interview enables me to use the research participant's own experiences, often described in great detail, as the principal data source for identifying factors, exploring their relative salience for research participants and tracing the multiple trajectories that characterize their ethnic identity development processes. To gather adequate information on the specific experiences of research participants throughout their lives to date, I needed to hear – in their own words – how the participants in the study described and framed their experiences and constructed their ethnic identities. Since the study focused on the students' own interpretations of their encounters with parents, siblings, friends, family in several different countries, teachers, roommates, and others, I needed a research design that allowed for the nuance and subtlety of the research participants' own thoughts to *emerge*

and be expressed. At the same time, I used the pre-determined factors in my card rating system another way to quantify the relative salience they attribute to key factors in their ethnic identity development.

Based on a review of current literature, the topic areas addressed in the Interview Protocol (Appendix A) are relevant when examining the psychosocial processes of ethnic identity development.

Epistemological and Methodological Frameworks

The purpose of qualitative research varies according to the research paradigm and the methods and assumptions of the researcher. In general, qualitative researchers attempt to describe and interpret some human phenomenon, often by using the words of research participants. A researcher should attempt to be clear about her biases, presuppositions, and interpretations so that others can learn most effectively from the analysis and text.

Grounded Theory is the foundation of the methodology employed here because it allows for a systematic generation of findings from data, an inductive process. It "taps into the natural bent of people and formulates and expends it into a systematic methodology." (The Grounded Theory Institute, 2001). Any given experience occurs as a product not of a single factor but of the integration of a range of factors relevant for the individual having the experience. Actions are integrated with other actions, and categories of actions are integrated with other categories. "[N]othing is monovariable; everything is multivariable" (The Grounded Theory Institute, 2001). The crux of Grounded Theory is not forcing relevance on the experience of the research participants but instead finding out what is relevant and identifying the relating variables.

The informal, conversational context of the interviews yielded a wealth of information from the vocal tone, inflection and body language of the interviewees. An individuals narrative relays experiences related to their ethnic background. It is important to keep in mind that the person being interviewed may not be aware of key aspects of his or her ethnicity. Interview data, which consists only of conscious verbal presentation together with secondary information from body language, inflection and tone of voice, is therefore necessarily limited (Cornell, 2000; Seidman, 1998).

Analyzing qualitative data is a process of noticing, collecting, thinking, and organizing. When conducting qualitative data analysis, one is not simply noticing, collecting and thinking about things, and then writing a report (Seidel, 1998). Rather, the process is iterative and progressive, recursive and holographic – meaning that each step contains the entire process. For example, when you first notice things, you are already mentally collecting and thinking about those things (Seidel, 1998).

Research Participants

Criteria for Participation

Criteria for the selection of research participants grew out of the questions I sought to answer. Under the original selection criteria, eligible research participants were required to

- be 1.5 and second-generation Indian Americans;
- have a minimum of nine years of formal schooling in grades K-12, including all four years of high school, in the United States;
- have attended college in the United States;
- be citizens of the United States, either by birth or by naturalization;
- have parents who are both immigrants, having emigrated directly from India;
- be between the ages of 24 and 32; and
- have no children.

An additional goal was to represent a range of religious belief systems by interviewing Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Catholics and Sikhs of Indian ancestry.

Although these original criteria helped to focus my research study, "a research focus is not a sacred thing – that once declared it deserves unwavering loyalty or that, once fixed, the course of a research project must never be altered" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 32). Because one of my research objectives was to have religious diversity among the research participants, I eliminated the criterion of " having parents who… emigrated directly from India." The reason for this decision was that some second-generation Indian Americans who identify as Muslim or Ismaili have parents who were born in East Africa and then immigrated to the U.S. (sometimes via Canada). The parents of these research participants were immigrants, although not necessarily from India.

My research participants were drawn from two urban areas, one in the Northeast (Boston) and one in the Southeast (Atlanta). Both are cities with large Indian American populations. I specifically decided to study the populations of Atlanta and Boston because these cities are located in the regions that have the largest Indian American population (Lee, 1998b). In addition, Atlanta is included because Indian Americans living in the South are an understudied segment of the overall Indian American population and of the larger Asian American population. By including both a "northern" and a "southern" cohort among the research participants, I sought to collect a broad range of data that reflected more than the experiences and thoughts of people in a single geographic location.

I conducted twenty interviews in Boston in April and May, 2000, and twenty-one interviews in Atlanta in July and August, 2000. Each of the interviews took place at

either the home of the research participant or my home and lasted between one and two hours. The average interview lasted one hour and thirty minutes.

Identifying Research Participants

To identify 1.5- and second-generation Indian American men and women living in the selected metropolitan areas, I tapped into various social networks. I employed a variety of discovery networks. In Boston, **six** of the research participants — students at Harvard Law School, Harvard Dental School and a graduate of Tufts University — heard about the study through word of mouth from my personal acquaintances at area colleges and professional schools. Through the "word of mouth" strategy, I was able to reach those individuals who might not necessarily volunteer for this type of research study, and in particular those individuals who may not be involved with Indian/South Asian ethnic and religious organizations. **Four** Boston research participants responded to a posting on the NetSAP (Network of South Asian Professionals) email listserv. **Three** more were involved in Project IMPACT's South Asian American Mentoring Program.

I was concerned that a relatively large number of research participants who might be recruited solely through ethnic organizations would present a risk of skewing the sample toward Indian Americans who associate most actively with the Indian American community, and that my sample may therefore not represent a true cross-section of the 1.5- and second-generation population. I tried to minimize any such skew by tapping into various social networks and using a "snowball effect" – participants identifying additional potential participants – to recruit research participants. **Four** research participants were identified and recruited via the snowball effect. **Three** Boston-area

research participants were friends of a person who could not herself participate in the study because she did not fit my selection criteria.

In Atlanta, my primary method for locating potential research participants was to tap into informal social networks. **Ten** people agreed to take part in the study after being contacted on my behalf by my own *childhood and college friends*. Because I left Atlanta six years ago, these research participants were whom I had not met before contacting them for the study. **Eleven** research participants came my way through the "snowball effect."

In both cities, it was not difficult to find research participants. In Boston, I had to turn away a number of people because they did not fit the age criteria. Several people asked me to change that criterion because of their strong desire to participate in the study. In Atlanta I turned away several potential participants who were Hindu in order to maintain religious diversity within my sample. In most cases, people were extremely curious about this research study and were amazed that their lives could actually provide research data. Out of the forty-one participants, only one individual seemed to have agreed to participate out of obligation to the person who asked him; his indifference emerged in his terse answers to all of my interview questions.

Addressing Confidentiality

Research participants were informed that their participation in this research is confidential. In order to provide anonymity, pseudonyms are used in this manuscript and will be used in any future publications. I assigned pseudonyms that attempt to capture any regional (Indian), linguistic, and or religious qualities of a person's name. If an individual has an "Indian" name, he/she was given an "Indian" pseudonym. If a person

has a name typical to a subgroup, regional or religious, a name typical of that subgroup was assigned. No information is included in this manuscript, or will be include in future manuscripts, by which a reader could identify a research participant. Additionally, to maintain a high level of privacy, all transcribed tapes are designated by a code.

Interview Procedure

The interviews took place at a location of the interviewee's choice. I let the individuals know that a quiet place was necessary so that I could tape-record our conversation and that the interview would take between one-and-a-half and two hours. Prior to the interview, each participant received a reminder email or phone call confirming the date, time, location, the purpose of the study and the themes to be discussed. At the time of the interview, I reviewed the consent form, specifically double-checking if the participant fit the sample criteria and explaining the "swing-door" policy, which allowed each of us to contact the other, in case the interviewee wanted to share information that he/she later remembered or I needed to clarify any points. I also obtained permission to tape-record the interview and informed the research participant that each audiocassette was assigned a code to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Each interviewee signed a consent form prior to the start of the interview. At the conclusion of each interview I reiterated my assurance of confidentiality, reminded the interviewee of the "swing-door" policy, and thanked the participant for his/her time and willingness to share his/her experiences. (Appendix B.)

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview protocol followed a semi-structured format. This approach enabled me to build a conversation around a series of open-ended questions on formalized topic areas. I attempted to ask questions that were not only open-ended but also reflected areas of interest to the research participants in an open and direct way. Except to the extent that the questions drew more on what I am interested in exploring than on what the research participant has said, I avoided imposing my own interests on the experience of the research participants. I found "detail-oriented," "elaboration" and "clarification" probes (Patton, 1990) to be useful in expanding or exploring research participant's responses, particularly those that contradicted an earlier assertion. For example, one research participant talked late in her interview about not liking Christianity because of western missionaries' historical conduct in India; I asked, "So does that mean you feel an attachment to India?" – not a question that was part of the interview protocol – in order to explore the ways in which her remark about India might contradict earlier statements about not feeling a connection to her parents' country of birth. The probes were also instrumental in keeping the interviews focused and aided in the flow of the conversation.

The large-scale, open-ended interview questions were asked in a thematic manner across K-12 years, college, and adulthood. The interview protocol consisted of general, pre-defined topic areas. These were designed to guide the interviews in a loosely structured manner. The general topic areas included descriptions of experiences growing up, schooling, friendships, significant others, and transitions to college; descriptions of interactions with strangers; and self-perceptions. For the most part the specified domains

were covered in the sequence presented (Appendix A). The semi-structured interview protocol provided me flexibility in adapting some of the questions with each interviewee while being responsive to particular issues the interviewee was interested in exploring.

I began my interviews with informational questions about the individual's family history and immigration to the United States, and then transitioned into my open-ended question about identity, keeping in mind the main topic areas of this research study:

- factors affecting ethnic identity from adolescence through college to adulthood and their relative salience;
- the role of religion in the ethnic identity development process; and
- the impact of racial and religious discrimination throughout the life span.

All of these factors will inform the multiple trajectories in ethnic identity development that I present in Chapter 8.

I structured my questions in such a way as to enable research participants to reconstruct their memories and not merely to "remember." For example, I would ask the question, "What was it like going to religious functions?" rather than the question, "Do you remember what it was like going to religious functions?" Everything the research participants are telling me is in a certain sense canonical; they have engaged in thought and analysis about the experience, and their memories will be shaped by this after-the-fact thinking. But by using a memory-reconstruction approach to question design, I believe I was able to get a more detailed version of the experience — more "raw," for wont of a better word — than "Do you remember…" questions would have produced. Such tactics also helped avoid the closing off of certain topic areas when a poorly-worded question, like "Do you remember feeling different?", yields a "no" and nothing more. This "reconstruction " strategy drew on the distinction between "deep memory" and

"canon memory."[11] The purpose was to engage in the research participants in the experiences they were recounting rather than a superficial memory.

Card Rating Data

After completing the questions in the interview protocol, I asked the participants to respond to the modified Likert scale. I introduced it only at this point in the interview so that the act of ranking of the salience of the pre-determined factors would not affect the qualitative data. I had ten predetermined factors, which I had written out in advance on index cards. I asked research participants to assign a value, on a scale of one to five with five being "most influential," the importance that each factor had in their life. I held up each card, with the hand-written factor (in large print) facing the research participant. We went through the factors three times, once for each life period, beginning with K-12 and ending with adulthood. The typical participant not only provided a numerical value for the factor, but also commented on the answer they gave.

By asking for a value between one and five, the card rating protocol was designed as a modified version of the Likert Scale. I recorded each participant's response on a grid as the interviewee spoke (Appendix C).

I completed all 41 interviews before embarking on any in-depth analysis of the interview data. After completing all the interviews, I studied the transcripts. By completing the data collection process, rather than integrating the stages of interviewing and analyzing, I minimized any imposing on the generative process of the interviews what I think I have learned from other participants. Having said that, it is impossible for

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[11] The distinction between "deep memory" and "canon memory" is an important one in qualitative research.

one interview not to impact subsequent interviews. There is no "on and off switch" between interviews (Seidman, 1998).

Data Analysis Procedure

Data Reduction

Transcribing the Interviews

I transcribed twelve of the forty-one interviews myself; the rest were transcribed by a third party. In my process, I first listened to the entire tape and made notes for myself. I listened to the tape a second time, in order to generate a catalog of themes and concepts. I then listened to the tapes a third time and transcribed those sections of the interviews which were most relevant. In the interest of time, I later hired a transcriptionist who transcribed the remainder of the tapes word for word and provided hard-copy and Microsoft Word file versions of each transcript. I reviewed the transcripts while listening to the audiocassettes to check for accuracy and correction of words.

On many occasions, research participants would use a non-English word. The transcriptionist put in a code and used the same code for each time she could tell the word was used. For example, when research participants talked about Diwali, the transcriptionist did know the spelling or the meaning of the word. She used a phonetic spelling, and each time a research participant mentioned Diwali she used the same spelling. I was thus able to go through and do a "search" and "find" in Microsoft Word and make the needed corrections.

I made duplicates of all the interview tapes and hard-copies of the interview transcripts. One copy of every interview (both audio and hard-copy) is at my current residence and the second copy at my parents' home in Atlanta, Georgia.

I found that the amount of data generated was enormous and unwieldy, with transcripts often exceeding 70 pages in length. Given the semi-structured nature of the interviews, I could expect, as Patton (1990) puts it to "spend a great deal of time sifting through responses to find patterns that.... emerged at different points in different interviews with different people" (p.282). Arguably, the strength of the interview design was that it allowed the participants to introduce topics and ideas spontaneously and the researcher to accommodate changes in the direction and flow of the conversation. However, my additional probes turned out to be an exercise in time management that I had not anticipated. Invariably, I found that changing the order in which I asked the certain questions from the Interview Protocol allowed me to sequence and segment topics of discussion in ways that were sensitive to the specific research participant being interviewed.

"The critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to 'can' (i.e., get rid of) most of the data you accumulate" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 35). I followed the procedure detailed by Seidman (1998, p. 101):

> Mark what is of interest to you as you read it. Do not ponder about the passage. If it catches your attention, mark it. Trust yourself as a reader. If you are going to err, err on the side of inclusion. As you repeat the winnowing process, you can always exclude material; but materials once excluded from a text tend to become like unembodied thoughts that flee back to the stygian shadows of the computer file, and tend to remain there.

Coding

The disassembling and reassembling of the data occurs through the coding process. "Codes serve to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made of the data...coding become the fundamental means of developing the analysis...researchers

use codes to pull together and categorize a series otherwise discrete events, statements, and observations which they identify in the data" (Charmaz in Seidel,1998, p. E-4) Although the data at first to be "a mass of confusing, unrelated accounts" (Seidman, 1998), it is through my coding and re-coding that an interesting chaos turns into an interesting order.

Although I used The Ethnograph, a qualitative software analysis program, I started the data reduction process the old-fashioned way. I first read each transcript while listening to the tape and jotting down notes, particularly when I found repeated themes and patterns that might represent the constellations of experience I was looking for. This reading revealed certain broad categories of experience, including: identity, religion and discrimination. Using Post-It notes and flags, I developed a color-coding system that assigned a unique color to each of the following concepts: identity, discrimination, gender, K-12 school experiences, and religion. I then read through each transcript a second time to assign specific key words to the excerpts marked with Post-It flags.

Interviews generate an enormous amount of text. The vast array of words, sentences, paragraphs, and pages have to be reduced to what is of greatest importance and interest to the researcher on the basis of the research questions (Wolcott, 1990). Seidman stresses that the reduction of the data be done inductively rather than deductively (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). With this in mind, during the second full "go 'round" with the transcripts I re-flagged each marked quote with a colored flag to correspond to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd research questions.[12] During this read-through, I approached the transcripts with my three research questions specifically in mind. This multi-faceted process included

[12] Purple flags marked quotes relating to religion; blue flags quotes related to my first research question on general ethnic/cultural identity, and red flags marked experiences of oppression and racism.

reading the transcripts and categorizing certain segments as they possibly answered my research questions, all while simultaneously reflecting on the passages and thinking about themes that seem to be emerging from the data.

Coding is a complex process. Code words are terms that describe how the researcher thinks about and makes use of code words. Codes can be heuristic tools to facilitate discovery and further investigation of the codes can be objective, transparent representations of facts (Seidel, 1998). Within this study, in terms of coding I used both "objectivist" and "heuristic" approaches. In a heuristic approach, code words are flags that point to relevant material in the data. Heuristic codes help reorganize the data and provide different views of the data. They facilitate the discovery of themes, and they help open up the data for further intensive analysis and inspection. Heuristic coding is more helpful because the heuristic code words change and evolve as the analysis develops. Some code words were used for both heuristic and objectivist purposes. The heuristic codes proved more free-flowing and made it easier to analysis in a certain direction. For example, my code "EECTMNRE" – which stands for "events, experiences, and conversations that made you take notice of your racial or ethnic identity" – was a code I used to mark several types of remarks, including critical incidents and statements that indicated respondents' thoughts about high-salience themes. The way I used the same code word changed over time. Heuristic code words change and transform the researcher, who in turn changes and transforms the code words as the analysis proceeds.

The Ethnograph Software

I imported all the interview transcripts (Microsoft Word files) into The Ethnograph, which translated the transcripts into "numbered" data files that it can process. There are two main functions in The Ethnograph:

- **"Code Data Files"** – This procedure facilitates the process of identifying and naming interesting things in the data files.
- **"Search for Coded Segment"** – This step allows me to bring order to the data. This is the sorting and sifting of the data – which makes it easer for me examine, compare and contrast things that I noticed in the data.

While using the color-coded hard copy transcripts, I employed open-ended coding of the topics addressed by the subject (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997) in all 41 interviews. Working from this hard copy of the text, I transferred my findings into the Ethnograph file. It is easier for me to "see" the data in a hard copy than on the computer screen, which is why I started out "the old-fashioned way." Through the dialectical process of reading and sifting I began setting aside segments of data. I identified themes and sub-themes from the hard copy – designated by code phrases such as "CNICDIW" ("connection to Indian culture through Diwali functions") and "CNICLAN" ("connection to Indian culture through language") — and identified and labeled them in Ethnograph. Code words were useful in finding and collating the themes and sub-themes that shed most light on my research questions and that seem to be densely represented across interviews and within individual narratives. After identifying over 250 code phrases, I went back and found the code words that directly related to answering my research questions and then categorized the relevant code words by parent codes: Q1, Q2 and Q3.

There were a handful of excerpts that I knew were important but could not categorize; I color coded these excerpts turquoise on the hard copy, key-worded them "unknown" in Ethnograph, and wrote a memo. Creating a separate category for the "unknowns" and writing the memo produced a process that forced me to re-think how they were picked, and their relevance to the research at hand: answering my research questions. This process clarified the properties and the importance of the "unknown" code phrases (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The memo feature in The Ethnograph software is perfect for such a process and helped me to discover what actually was relevant enough to include in the manuscript.

When working with excerpts from the interviews, I found myself selecting passages from one interview that connected thematically to passages from another interview. There are passages that stand out because they are striking either because of the drama of the incident or because of the manner in which they were told. Some passages stood out because they were contradictory; these in particular were important as not to only use materials that support my own opinions – which helps ensure "validity."

Data Reconstruction

Semi-Structured Interviews

Analysis evolves and develops in an iterative and recursive fashion. As the analysis develops, one learns to think differently about the data already collected. During this process I became quite familiar with the phrase, "one step forward, two-steps back." The act of coding is a form of analysis. Discoveries — patterns, sequences, processes, wholes, classes, types, and categories — emerge from the sorting and sifting process and from examining the coded transcript. The act of coding changes both the original data

and the researcher's relationship to the data (Seidel, 1998). The initial sorting and sifting has three effects:

1. It results in revisions in the coding scheme.
2. It helps identify new findings in the data.
3. It facilitates the researcher's process of thinking and making discoveries.

Throughout the interviews, I remained cognizant of non-verbal cues as well as verbal behaviors. I also took notice of how readily participants answered questions, making note of the response rates. For example, when I asked general questions about identity, I paid attention to whether or not informants mention race, ethnicity or religion spontaneously or whether their responses dealt with race, ethnicity or religion — or whether one of those themes arose only when I asked more focused questions.

In addition to coding interviewees' transcripts in The Ethnograph, I created profiles as face identifier sheets in ethnograph. I created charts to bring together certain data for all 41 research participants, including socio-demographic information (including where participants grew up, went to college, and live as adults), respondents' religious identities and current occupations, and charts synthesizing the card-rating findings by life period. I also examined the data for logical relationships and for contradictions. I created a database of the racial demographics of participants' K-12 schools, neighborhoods, cities and states; the racial/ethnic demographics of their college during the years they were there; and of their workplace or graduate school and current-day situation. I also made a database of how research participants responded when I asked how, at each life stage, they would have answered the question: "What are you?"

After organizing interview excerpts into categories, I then executed a search and find. I searched for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts within those categories and for connections between the various categories. Performing a comparative analysis of the data allows for axial coding. I found themes that connected different passages within and across interviews, which then were further developed into broader themes (Ely et al., 1997). For example, two themes that emerged from the axial coding, defined as coding to reveal common themes across interviews, helped shape my presentation of the data: the linkage made by research participants between ethnicity and religion, and the nature of events and experiences research participants described as discriminatory. My goals during the process were:

1. to make sense out of each collection,
2. to look for patterns and relationships both within a collection and across collections, and
3. to make general discoveries about the phenomenon.

Card Rating Data

Having flagged and coded the qualitative data, I then moved on to create an appropriate categorization of the quantitative "Card Rating" data. These data map the relative salience, on a Likert scale, of various pre-determined identity factors such as family, language, and religion. I recorded these data on the Card Rating data grid (Appendix C) during each interview, and after completing all 41 interviews entered the data into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet program. The card-rating data serve an important function, as a guide toward salient factors for each individual, and something I can compare across interviews.

In Excel, I created three separate spreadsheets representing the three life periods that were discussed in the inquiry: the K-12 years, college and adulthood. Each time-period spreadsheet incorporates the rating given to each factor by each research participant (Appendix E).

As to each of the ten pre-determined factors, the question I asked to each was, "On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, how important were [the factors] during [each one of the three life periods]?" In certain cases, participants answered with a negative number to indicate that the factor in question had a negative influence on their lives during a certain time period. For example, one research participant, Farzad, rated religion a "–1" during his high school years. I interpreted that to mean that it played a minor role, and had a negative impact on his life at the time. Another research participant, Mina, responding to a question about her high school years, rated gender as "4 and –4." She explained the "4" was because she was received positive influences in school for being a female; she rated it a "-4" because she had a brother and was bothered by the gender-based double standards in her family.

Using these data, I identified the factors that received highest and lowest ratings within each time period and across the lifespan to date and determined the frequency of each value's appearance among the pre-determined factors for each life period. I calculated the mean for each factor during the three different life periods, accounting for those few data which were aberrant. For example, in the category "Visits to India," if a research participant noted a location other than India – e.g., Farzad's adolescent visit to Uganda – that value was not included in the calculations. Likewise, the mean value for

Trips to India during college averages only the responses of the 19 participants who *went* to India during college; the 21 "N/A's" are just that – they do not affect the mean.[13]

Some research participants answered in fractions of a point, offering responses like "3.5" or "4.5." Some wanted to answer in quarter points, with a response like "3.75" or "4.25." I replied that responses needed to be whole numbers or halves. At this time, I have calculated the mean using these ".5" responses, but I am considering rounding up at least for the purposes of the answering my research question 1A.

A few research participants gave two numbers in response to a single question. For example, one research participant, Binu, rated the importance of the Indian community in her life, she wanted to differentiate between her Malyali (regional) community and the "Indian" community — which in her mind meant the *north* Indian community. Binu's response is indicative of the complexity of questions about community and identity, showing why quantitative research alone cannot address the nuances of the ethnic experience. I recorded both responses on the chart.

Presenting the Data

These themes and their analysis constitute the research findings of the study and are reported in detail in the chapters that follow. Seidman (1998) stresses the importance of using the participants' voices throughout the text, rather than the third person transformation of that voice, which distances the reader from the research participant's experience. Ely (1997) and her colleagues point out the temptation of researchers to expropriate and to use inappropriately their research participants' experiences for their

[13] In the Socioeconomic Class category, the appearance of "N/A" represents the few occasions when I forgot to ask a research participant about the issue.

own purposes. Using the first-person voice helps researchers guard against falling into this trap.

After I contextualized the interview data with the conceptual frameworks delineated (see lit review), I attempted to uncover any ecological frames that help shape an individual's trajectory(ies) and to identify normative patterns. I also coded the data, hoping to identify any patterns of change to find any correlations among interviewees' experiences. One of my primary objectives was to isolate the various identity trajectories and to identify the important themes present in multiple participants' individual trajectories.

Validity and Reliability

The topic of validity and reliability is part of a chronic and long-term debate among qualitative researchers because of their disagreement underlying the epistemological assumptions. Qualitative researchers argue for a new vocabulary and rhetoric with which to discuss validity and reliability. In the most current discussion of the these terms, some have proposed an actual substitution of words such as "trustworthiness." Scholars believe that qualitative researchers must inform what they do by concepts of "credibility," "transferability," "dependability," and "unconfirmability" (Kirk, 1986).

One way I provided credibility was by interviewing a large sample of forty-one people from two different regions of the United States. I compared their experiences in both qualitative and quantitative terms, so that the comments or the quantified card rating data of one research participant become a check on those of others. I kept in mind that the goal of the process is to understand how my research participants understood and

made meaning of their experience. Seidman (1998) stresses researchers staying away from merely providing an "audit trail." He believes what is needed are not formulaic approaches to enhancing either validity or trustworthiness, but an understanding of and respect for the issues that underlie those terms.

Through my training — particularly a semester-long class on interviewing — I have learned to be disciplined about keeping the interviews as the participants' meaning-making process, but I am part of that meaning-making process. (Seidman, 1998). I worked with the material, selected from it, interpreted and described and analyzed it. Qualitative researchers do not report on studied objects. They report on their interaction with the objects, which is part of why objectivity is so difficult. (Kirk & Miller, 1986) Not only by asking questions, but also by reacting and responding to the research participants, interviewers are part of the interview, no matter how hard we try to "step back" and "be neutral." Only by recognizing that interaction and affirming its possibilities can interviewers use their skills to minimize the distortion that can occur because of their role in the interview (Patton, 1989). The problem of reliability can be determined by the researcher documenting her procedure – how the data is collected and analyzed, and in particular how and why decisions are made. (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Limitations of the Study

Establishing criteria for the research sample automatically set limits on generalizability of my findings — both by excluding some of the studied population and by creating a pool of research participants which is hetergeneous in ways that may affect the experiences they describe. The exclusion of certain individuals who would qualify

for the study but for just one or two variables limits the breadth of applicability of this research.

For example, the limits on participants' age and on their parents' birthplace (the requirement that participants' parents be foreign-born) controls for the generational variable but also creates a historical limitation because the information discovered may exclude Indian Americans of the same age group who are visibly Indian in ethnicity but whose parents were born in the United States. Likewise, the requirement that research participants attended a minimum of nine years of formal schooling in grades K-12, including all four years of high school, and college in the United States creates an inherent class bias by excluding the segment of otherwise qualified individuals who did not attend college.[14] The requirement also limits the applicability of the research to those Indian Americans who immigrated as teens or young adults.

This study examines a particular generational cohort and thus may not reflect the experiences of 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans whose adolescence and young adulthood occurred before the mid-1970s. It also may not be applicable to the experiences of 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans who are teen-agers today. Likewise, because research participants were recruited via formal and informal social networks and "self-selected" into the study by agreeing to participate, this research excludes the experiences of those 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans who choose not to identify with any type of "Indian American" community.

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[14] However, for reasons related to socio-economic class and parental educational achievement, for this second generation cohort I would be hard pressed to find members of this generational cohort who did not attend college.

As to geography, I chose Atlanta and Boston as research sites, knowing that the geographic specificity of two urban regions would preclude considering variables like rural living and other regional influences. Because it includes research participants from two eastern-seaboard cities who grew up, for the most part, in semi-urban and suburban areas, this study may not be generalizable to the experiences of similar Indian American young adults currently living or with childhood backgrounds in the Midwest and west, in Hawaii, or in urban or rural areas.

Finally, it must be acknowledge that I do not approach ethnic identity through the lens of gender. Although gender issues occasionally arise in the context of other discussions, I do not attempt to build on the research of Maira (1998) and others whose work includes a significant emphasis on matter of gender and sexuality.

By excluding from the study individuals who have children, I am researching the lives of single people or those in childless couples. Often younger people who have not had children have only focused on themselves in terms of identity issues, while individuals who have children have an additional reason to think about issues pertaining to race, religion, and culture.

Researcher Subjectivity

Born in India and raised in Atlanta since age five, I identify as an Indian American. Living on the East Coast of the United States, with my parents living in Atlanta, Georgia, my sister living in London, England, and the rest of my family living in Ahmedabad and Bombay, India, has created a strong transnational dimension to my Indian American identity.

My identity is both an asset and a limitation in this study. It is an asset because it provides me with an insider status, not only for finding research participants but also for overcoming possible wariness among participants about why I am doing this research. My insider status could have different meanings for different research participants. For some it could encourage candor because some people may not be comfortable discussing ethnicity issues with those of other ethnic groups. For others it could create a sense that certain responses are expected, or that research participants will be "judged" by me for speaking critically about Indians or the Indian community. My identity is also a limitation because I may be embarking on the process already having some presuppositions of my own.

My B.A. in Religion and my Master's degree in Theological Studies; and my doctoral study in Social Justice Education may also be both an asset and a source of bias. Additionally, I am a person of faith(s), a practicing Hindu and I attend church services with my partner in life, who is a practicing Episcopalian. I am a woman of color who has herself experienced both racial and religious discrimination. I worked with a peer debriefer in order to help correct for possible personal biases, who is familiar with ethnic identity development and the importance of religion for immigrant populations but who is not of Indian descent or a Hindu faith.

Coming Soon to a Dissertation Near You

In Chapter 4, I present the socio-demographic profile of the research participant cohort in this study, including a brief discussion of global and local factors influencing the sociocultural and historical contexts of the research participants' lives in this study. In Chapter 5, I set out to answer my first research question. I lay out the factors research

participants reported being the most salient in their ethnic identity development process. In Chapter 6, I answer my research question number two, reporting out the data revealing the roles of religion in participants' lives and their effect on ethnic identity development. In Chapter 7, I focus on experiences of oppression – both racial and religious – as reported by the research participants. Chapter 8 describes the Identity Clusters I have identified, each of which represents a constellation of experiences and which collectively reveal the multiple trajectories of research participants' ethnic identity development. Finally, in Chapter 9 I provide an overall conclusion and discuss the implications of these findings and future areas for research.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Sociopolitical Context

Social identities are affected by the institutional, societal and individual structures in our world. This study examines the factors involved at the individual (and societal) levels affecting the identity development of one particular social identity – ethnic identity. Institutional structures such as schools, colleges and the media also affect the ethnic identity development process. Thus for any study of ethnic identity to be meaningful, it is imperative to consider social, cultural and political events of the time. The research participants in this study ranged from age 22 to age 32 — a large, 10-year time span. There are numerous social, cultural and political events on the national and international stage that impacted the lives of the research participants ultimately affecting the ethnic identity development process. From the OPEC oil crisis of the mid-1970's, the Persian Gulf War, and the Rodney King beating to President Clinton's 1999 visit to India and the new wave of Indian immigrants who have arrived in the U.S. during the "tech craze" of the late 1990's, innumerable social and historical events have affected the lives of research participants over the past three decades. In addition, there are countless events that happened in research participants' local community that left an impression on them, including court-ordered bussing of inner city kids, persistent evangelizing in the neighborhood, and incidents of drug pushing in school.

It is important to provide certain data to situate the research participant population on the American socioeconomic spectrum. The parents of the research participants are

part of the post-1965 wave of immigrants who are predominantly of the professional class. Between 1965 and 1980, thousands of highly educated Indian immigrants arrived in the U.S.[15] Of the 41 research participants, 23 had at least one parent who was a physician (M.D.), Ph.D., or nurse. Nine had fathers who were engineers. Nine had parents who worked in business; this includes those who worked in or owned hotels or motels, or owned convenience stores, liquor stores or Indian restaurants. Two participants' families immigrated to the United States because of their mothers getting jobs here.

Thirty of the research participants were born in the U.S., while nine were born in India, one in South Africa, and one in Uganda. Of those born abroad, five arrived in the U.S. before age five and six between the ages of five and nine. Two of the immigrant research participants came to the United States via Canada; Hussan spent just a few months there at age three, but Jaya lived in Toronto from age two to age nine.

In terms of formal schooling, all but six were educated exclusively in the United States; those who arrived after age five had received some elementary schooling outside of the U.S. Two research participants spent their seventh grade year studying in India and another research participant spent her junior year of high school in Mexico. One research

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[15] 71 percent of this cohort possesses bachelor's degrees, 45 percent hold Masters' degrees, and a large proportion are physicians. This high educational and occupational level of Indian immigrants in the late 1960's and 1970's was the result of two factors. First, a large number of Indian physicians, pharmacists, nurses and other medical professional were allowed to immigrate to the U.S due to the shortage of domestic medical personnel during the Vietnam War. Second, many Indians who came as foreign students and completed their master's and Ph.D. programs in the U.S. changed their status to permanent residents (Chandrasekhar, 1982; Seth, 1995; Shah, 1993). A few women also came as professionals. In addition, approximately 70,000 Indian refugees from the business and professional classes, expelled by the Idi Amin regime in Uganda n the early 70's, were admitted to the U.S. under a special clause. Many other Indians immigrated from the Caribbean Islands and the British Commonwealth countries (Seth, 1995).

participant, Parth, was born in the U.S., returned with his parents to India and spent seven years there, then returned to the U.S. at age ten.

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All but two of the research participants grew up with both parents married to each other and living together. Of the two exceptions, one grew up with her father and stepmother after her biological mother's death, and the other was raised by her mother alone after her father died while she was in middle school. One of the research participants is an only child. Many participants reported that grand parents and other family members lived with them for long periods of time when they were growing up.

Although the research participants today reside in the Atlanta and Boston and their respective metropolitan areas, they grew up all over the country: 51.2% in the

South, 17.1% in the Northeast, 12.2% in the mid-Atlantic region, 0.4% in the Midwest, and 0.4% on the West Coast. About a fifth (19.42%) of the research participants grew up in multiple states.

Neighborhood and School Environment During K-12

Thirty-six of the 41 research participants were raised mostly in the same city or town for their lives K-12; if the family moved at all, it was only a "cross-town" move between neighborhoods with similar socio-economic and racial make-ups. Five research participants grew up in more than one city and two of these, Priti and Seema, moved three or more times during their K-12 years. The participants were raised in different types of neighborhoods, the majority living in suburban, predominantly White neighborhoods of middle-class socio-economic backgrounds. Ahalya grew up in a semi-urban working-class setting and Anand lived in both working class and upper-middle-class neighborhoods at different points during childhood.

Nearly everyone was satisfied with the neighborhood they grew up in; just a few made statements about not liking the neighborhood. Two research participants explicitly discussed their discontent with their neighborhoods: Vishali and Monali. Until middle school Vishali lived in predominantly-White, working-class neighborhood. She did not like living there because "everyone" made fun of her and "the other kids were dumb." Monali lived in a diverse setting in New York until age ten, when her family moved to Kansas and she spent the next eight years "among a sea of White people."

School occupied a central part of life for the research participants. Indian Americans through this time are an invisible minority. Most of the research participants self-identified as good, motivated students and reported that education was stressed in the

home. A majority of research participants (75%) attended public schools. The other 25 percent attended private schools. Of these, three of the four Catholic research participants — Irfan, Shiren and Binu — attended Catholic parochial school, and the remainder attended secular private schools. With the exception of two participants, Farzad and Bipin, there were no "switch-overs" from public to private schools or vice-versa. When asked to describe the kind of school they attended, the majority said "mostly White" or "predominantly White" schools. Fewer than 20 percent of research participants described their school settings as "diverse"; these participants' descriptions of their schools ranged from "mixed" to "diverse" to "since there were so many colors it didn't matter what you were."[16]

Colleges Attended

Because immigration from India was banned before 1965, a significant number of second-generation Indian Americans did not begin entering American four-year colleges until the mid- to late-1980s. The number of Indian Americans attending American universities has grown exponentially in the decade and a half since. All research participants in this study entered college in the United States between 1986 and 1995, in a sociocultural context of increasing diversity on campuses. Research participants attended colleges and universities across the country (See Chart), with the largest proportions attending college in the South (48%) and Northeast (24%); 12 percent attended college in the Midwest, eight percent in the mid-Atlantic region, and four percent in the West. Eight research participants attended more than one college or university, either because

[16] I was more interested in participants' *perception* of the racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhood and school than in the actual figures; accordingly, I did not ask them to fill it out on a demographic sheet.

they transferred during the undergraduate years or because they pursued graduate or professional school at an institution other than their undergraduate institution.

Table 4.1: Colleges Attended by Research Participants, by Region

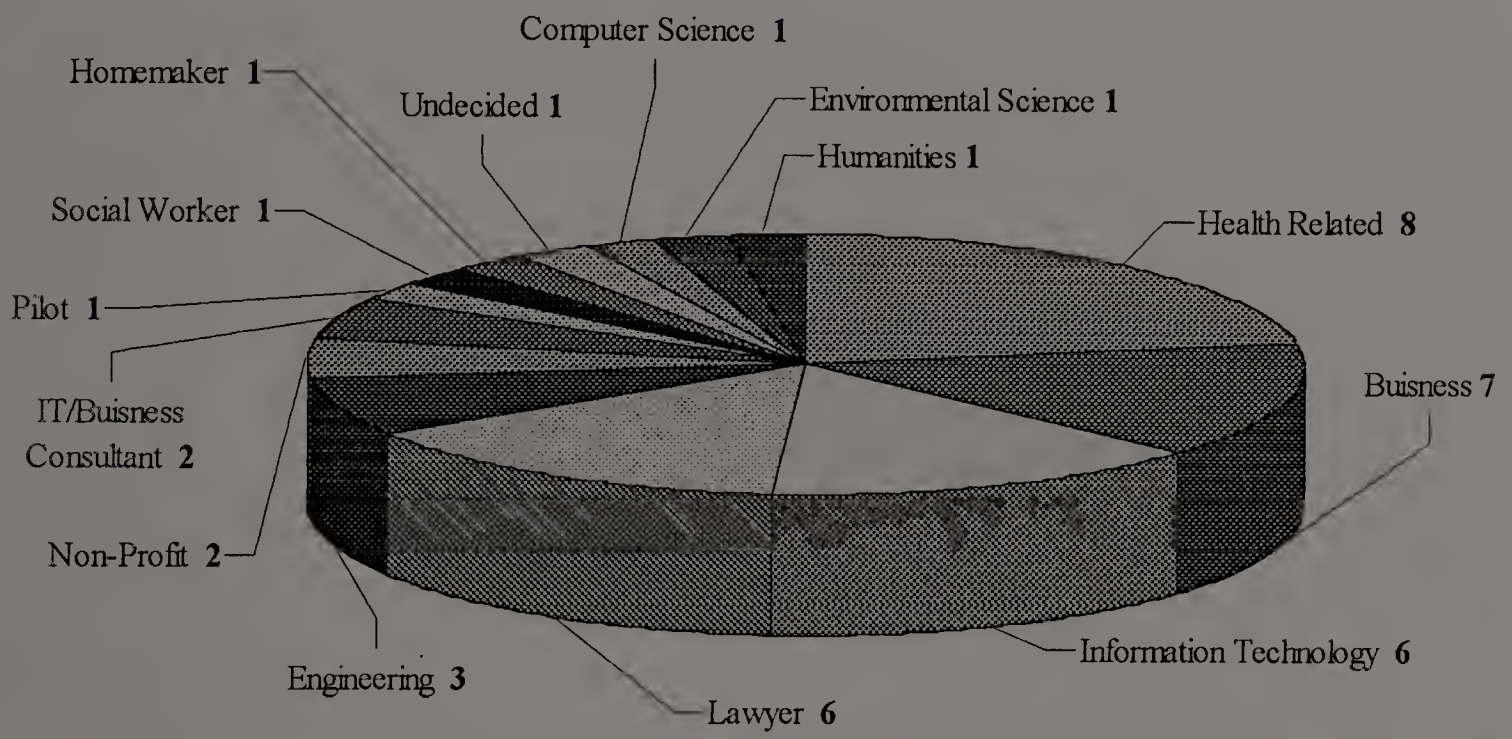
Northeast	South	Midwest	Mid-Atlantic	West
Bard	Agnes Scott College	Case Western Reserve	Penn State (2)	U.C. - Berkeley
Berklee School of Music	Duke	Michigan State	U. of Pennsylvania (2)	Stanford
Boston College of Pharmacy	Georgia Southwestern U.	Northwestern		
Boston U. (2)	Georgia State U. (3)	Oberlin		
Brown	Georgia Tech (2)	U. of Chicago		
Dartmouth	Miami University	U. of Kansas		
Northeastern	NC State			
Tufts (2)	Southern Tech		* Total exceeds 41 because eight research participants (Binu, Deepali, Farzad, Girish, Jaya, Mahesh, Monali and Vishali) each attended two or more colleges/universities.	
U.of Rochester	Trinity College			
U.of Mass.	U.N.C.-Chapel Hill (5)			
Western New England College	U.of Tennessee - Chattanoga			
	Wake Forest			
	Washington and Lee			

It is particularly important to remember the socio-historical context of the research participants times in college. For example, Parth was an undergraduate at Stanford University in the late 1980's — a time where there were relatively few Indian Americans in the student population. In contrast, Sarvesh and several others began college in the early- to mid-1990s, when there were significant number of Indian American students on college campuses.

Occupations and Marital Status in Adulthood

Many different *occupations* are represented among the research participants. About one in four (23%) of the research participants are health-related professionals including: physicians, a dentist, a genetic counselor, a medical insurance officer, and researchers in the health sciences. About 16 percent of the research participants are

Fig. 4.1: Research Participants' Occupations in Adulthood



business professionals, including business consultants, financial bankers, and a certified public accountant. Fifteen percent are working in the information technology field. Another 15 percent are Lawyers. Seven percent are engineers — software, industrial or civil. Two research participants (5%) work in the non-profit sector, one as director of an NGO and director of a domestic violence organizations focused on the needs of South Asian women. The other occupations represented at 2 percent each are: social worker, Ph.D. candidates in computer sciences and religious studies, a Master's candidate in

environmental studies, a homemaker and an "undecided" person. About one-fifth (22%) of the research participants are currently graduate or pre-professional students.

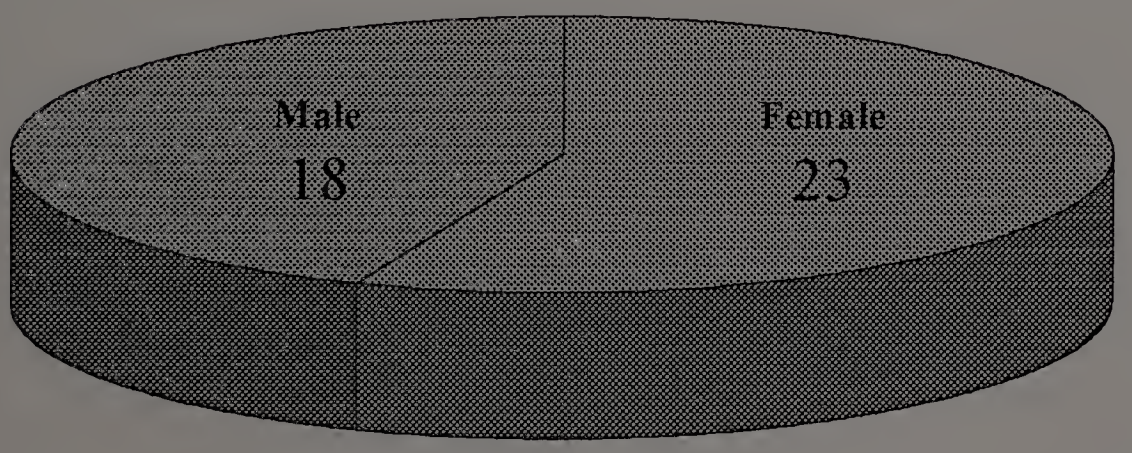
In terms of *marital status,* 71 percent of the research participants identified as single, although one person in this group emphasized that she was in an extremely serious monogamous relationship. Seven of the research participants (17%) are married, and had been married for between one and five years at the time of the interviews. Ten percent of the research participants were engaged to be married, and 2 percent reported having a "live-in" partner.

On issues of *sexual orientation,* one research participant self-identified as gay. It would be conjecture, however, to assume that all the others are heterosexual.

Gender

Twenty-three of the research participants are women and eighteen are men.

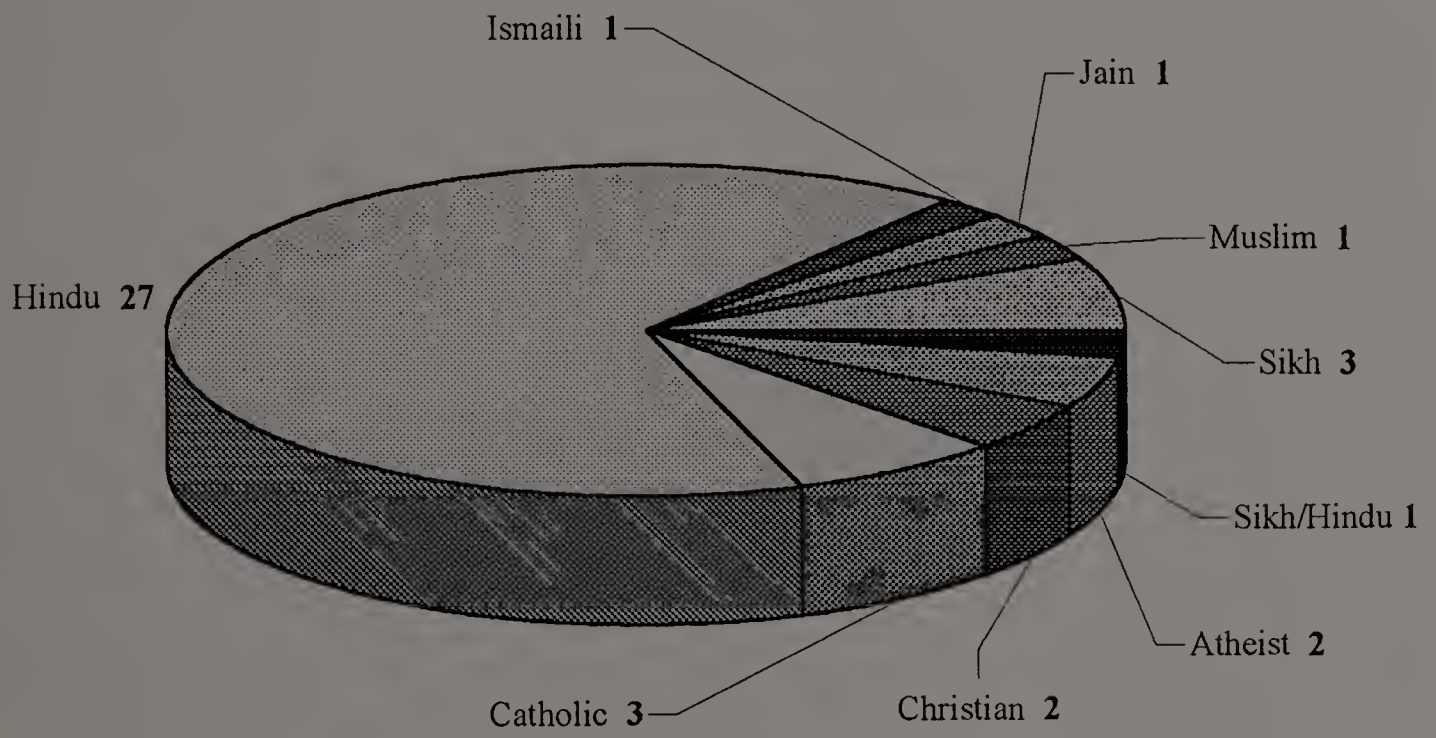
Fig. 4.2: Gender of Research Participants



Religious Identification

Figure 4.3 shows the religious identification of the research participants. All but three research participants identified with their "family religion," the religious tradition in which they were raised. The three exceptions were Hussan, whose family is Ismaili but who today identifies as Muslim; and Anand and Mina, both of whom were raised in Hindu families and now identify as Atheists.

Fig. 4.3: Religious Identification of Research Participants



CHAPTER 5

SALIENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Introduction

This chapter answers the questions: From the perspective of Indian Americans, what are the major factors involved in Indian American ethnic identity development? How do second-generation Indian Americans rank the salience of the multiple factors during the different periods of their lives?

In this chapter, I present the factors which emerged from the qualitative data as salient in the ethnic identity development process experienced by these 41 research participants during the K-12, college, and adult life periods. After I present the factors which were most salient based on the interview data, I present the Card Rating data (Appendix H). After introducing the Card Rating data, I will discuss certain factors which came through as highly salient based on the card-rating data, but which proved to be less than crucial when viewed in light of the interview data. The order in which I present the qualitative data in the first part of this chapter is not based on a ranking of salience, but rather is designed to take the reader from broad themes (e.g., community, dimensions of culture) to those which are more distinct and tangible (e.g., trips to India).

The factors I discuss are those which had the greatest impact on research participants' identity development processes across the life span; they may not be the factors that were the most salient in any given period of the life span or for any given participant. The factors varied in meaning, force and content over the life span. I present them thematically, discussing them in the specific life periods when relevant. I begin

with the role of community in ethnic identity development. Next I present the dimensions of culture (such as ethnoreligious celebrations, food, clothing, and Hindi movies), highlighting those that were mentioned most frequently by research participants. Following dimensions of culture, I discuss a factor that was very salient for a number of research participants: trips to India; I note how the importance of these trips varies across the lifespan. Finally, I present the role of language as it affects ethnic identity development in my second-generation cohort. In this and subsequent chapters I use pseudonyms to describe and discuss the research participants' experiences.

After presenting the qualitative data, I will provide a brief discussion of the findings, which arose out of the Card Rating inquiry, in which research participants were asked to rank the salience of ten predetermined factors during each of the three life periods. These quantitative data are helpful because when juxtaposed with my qualitative findings they help one to focus in on the nuances of the research participants' experiences involving these factors. For example, why is it that when I have huge amounts of qualitative data on the importance of community, "Community" is ranked seventh among the Card-Rating factors? Part of the answer, which I discuss at greater length below, is that community is simultaneously a less tangible factor in the lives of the research participants and one that is a constant presence for most. It was the combination of Card-Rating and qualitative data that enabled me to think about contradictions like these and find the nuances of experience and perception that explained them.

The astute reader will notice that "Family" was rated highest in all three life periods. The role family played varied widely across research participants. Because family is not a focus of this research paper, and because I believe research participants

overstated their rankings of family because they felt as an Indian I "expected" them to consider family important,[17] I discuss family in the context of the Card-Rating findings addressed below.

Community

For most research participants, the notion of *community* is strong throughout the lifespan covered by this research. Community has a different function across the lifespan, but emerges as one of the most important factors affecting Indian American ethnic identity development. Community has a function in both cultural and religious settings, and often its roles in the both settings.

The data presented here show not only that community is a factor affecting Indian American ethnic identity development; they also show how community is the conduit for the range of cultural expressions for the research participants. Community and the role it had in the lives of the research participants was one of the most important themes that emerged from the qualitative data. During the K-12 years, the crucial way in which community was salient for research participants was by giving them the sense of belonging to a group. Most research participants discussed belonging to an "Indian community." Community — ethnoreligous or ethnic — was a major vehicle by which research participants felt connected to Indian culture. Community was an important socializing factor because it provided research participants with a group of people, including members of their own and their parents' generation, with whom they shared dinners and holiday celebrations.

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[17] For a more thorough discussion of this concept, see the discussion of family which appears below.

Community could be a group of families that came together for such dinners and celebrations or an ethnic- or religiously-based organization that sponsored events and owned property such as a temple or community center. Multiple "communities" could co-exist — as in Atlanta, where Farzad's childhood experiences included regular interaction with other Gujarati families in his neighborhood and less-frequent participation in larger events at the Indian American Cultural and Religious Center. It is often difficult to separate religious experiences from cultural experiences. Like Vinay, most second generation Indian Americans belonged to an *ethnoreligious community*.

> We'd go to the temple [and] also the cultural functions, we would always go and, you know, so it was not necessarily the religious aspect of Indian life, because we're not Hindu, but it was just the culture. ….all my friends are Hindu, you know, Indian, so I feel like an honorary Hindu…but it's just that closeness of staying, you know, with people that you feel very comfortable with, you know. So I just felt very connected, even though there were no Indians in my school, none, I was the only one.

Although it is difficult to extract research participants' *religious* community experiences from their *cultural* community experiences, I have done so whenever possible. Religious communities will be discussed in Chapter Five, which addresses in detail the role of religion in the lives of the research participants.

Involvement in the "Indian Community" During the K-12 Years

Research participants described community — whether ethnoreligious or ethnic — as a major vehicle by which they were able to feel a connection to Indian culture. The community was a space where they expressed aspects of their ethnic identity by participating in events, by "hanging out" with others who were having similar experiences, or simply by being among other young people with their skin color and by

other adults who looked and acted and sounded like their own parents. The research participants can be divided into five general cagetories of community involvement, of which four had at least an informal Indian social network in their lives. (Only the three research participants who "chose not to be involved" reported no Indian community or social network at all.) More than two-thirds of research participants fit into the two categories where community's effect was the most pronounced.

Table 5.1. Involvement in Community During K-12 Years.

Actively Involved	Participant	Didn't Have a Community	Marginalized	Did Not Want to Be Involved
18	9	7	4	3

- **Actively Involved**

Being an active member of Raleigh-Durham's Indian community played a vital role in Irfan's life:

> I think being active in the community was very important, because it kind of fostered a sense of, well, I can do the usual things that everyone else does, but then on the weekends [there are] special functions or dances – I mean, even if you couldn't make it to the function… you know, the Hindi classes…. just kept you aware of who you were, [and that was] very important. I don't think it was one specific thing.

Many research participants were active in their Indian American communities because they found there a refuge from the trials and tribulations of life as an ethnic and religious minority. For some, like Sarvesh, just having "other Indian Americans families around" provided a sense of community:[18]

[18] Sarvesh's experience is unusual, however, and reflects the fact that he grew up in a town of 2,000 people that included more than 200 Indian American families. Put simply, people who looked like him were everywhere – making it much easier *not* to need a refuge from the dominant society.

> In Illinois almost every weekend we would socialize other Indian families. We would go to puja every Sunday. And then we would get together on holidays and special occasions. I loved to go. I loved all my friends. I always felt comfortable there. It was a way to learn more about my culture.

- **Participant**

The "participant" category includes those research participants who reported going to events — sometimes only "major events" — sponsored by an Indian community, or associating with a few families, but not being actively involved in a community. Seema was typical of this group:

> One of things is I guess towards the end of high school, you know, I was a little bit more involved in the Indian community, you know, like would go, would go to the events or whatever when they'd have their Diwali show and dances and stuff.

For this group, community played a role in ethnic identity development, but the participant himself/herself felt more like a bystander than an involved person. In general, these research participants, when describing their community during their interviews, did not exhibit the energy or enthusiasm that the "active participant" group did.

Many reported that they were not actively involved for reasons related to constraints such as having parents engaged with running their own business. Ahalya, for example, remarked, "My parents were usually running the restaurant, whenever things were going on, we tried to make it to the big events."

- **Didn't Feel like They Had Community**

Research participants who did not have access to an Indian community, or whose parents chose not to participate, reported feeling like they had less of a connection to Indian culture. Parth, for example, grew up in suburban Houston, Texas, in the early and mid-1980's. In Houston, Parth said, "the Temple association and Indian association were far, so we weren't like constantly going to those. We used to get *India Abroad*; that was my big connection to Indian culture." Parth spoke matter-of-factly about his experiences, expressing not frustration but rather resignation to his feeling isolated as a teen. "My connection was probably a little, not great … My parents weren't too deeply tied into the Indian community," he shrugged.

Others in this group described having access (even if only occasionally) to an Indian community but not feeling a sense of connection to that community. Some felt that a group of people "to celebrate holidays" with did not, in and of itself, make a community. This sentiment was expressed particularly by those research participants whose "communities" were geographically or socially distant from research participants' families. Saleena and Girish, for example, grew up in small towns where they were virtually the only Indian Americans. Their families would travel long distances to other areas to attend religious and cultural functions. While these trips were important to their parents, Girish and Saleena themselves did not develops a sense of community from these trips. In Girish's words,

> Growing up, we used to have this, uh, Indian Association [in] the next neighboring town. They used to have events there, and there were a few kids like my age, and we used to go play football and stuff, but it wasn't anything like, you know, like connected with Indian people. I just thought they were other people and that was it.

- **Marginalized**

Anisa described feelings similar to Girish's, only it was socio-economic class rather than geography that separated her from other Indian Americans her age. Anisa only saw her Indian friends "at functions. A couple of times a month, maybe more." Most of them lived in another town — one which was more affluent than Anisa's. Growing up in a diverse, heavily working-class school where many of her friends were African American, Anisa had trouble relating to these Indian American peers. Anisa described this phenomenon by saying simply, "We weren't friends. We did not go to school together." Despite access to a group of fellow Indian Americans, Anisa felt alone: "Having no one to relate to was hard."

- **Did Not Want to Participate ("Forced" by Parents)**

Three research participants did not want to participate, and spoke rather of feeling "forced" by their parents to attend Indian American community functions. Because they resented attending events and did not enjoy them, even access to and familiarity with an Indian community did not lead to the sense of cultural connection that other research participants felt. Sweta remarked,

> I'd be like, "Do I have to go?"... So in that sense, I certainly wasn't like, uh, very active in like doing like Indian things with other Indians in the community. Like I actually didn't like – anytime we had family get-togethers, I didn't want to go, I didn't like it. I mean it – and I don't think it had to do with the fact that I was – I mean, you know, and it was just like I don't really want to get together with them.

Bindu's parents never required her to go to any Indian community events in Atlanta while she was a child, but then began "forcing" her to do so when she reached

adolescence. All the other kids her age had built friendships that went back into their childhoods; because she hadn't been around the community at that time, she came to events and found not only that she knew no one but also that others her age didn't know her or have with her the bond they had with each other. This only increased her desire not to participate, and she reported having "no" Indian friends while in high school despite having access to an active ethnoreligious community.

Among the five groups discussed above, research participants in the actively-involved were the ones who really talked about having a connection to Indian culture through community during K-12. A few members of the second group ("participant") said the same. Virtually all of those in groups three and four now talk about a childhood Indian community as something they "missed out on." With many, the sense of disappointment about that came through in their tone of voice and choice of words. Some speculated that if they had had a community maybe they would be "stronger" in their culture today, as adults. For some, these reflections are recent developments; only now, upon reflection, have they begun to feel like they missed out on something.

Alone in the Classroom

The impact of socialization in schools influenced the lives of all 41 research participants. Many reported feeling a lack of connection to an Indian culture in school because of the absence of a community of classmates; at times, these feelings had serious, negative emotional and social effects. Farzad and Vishali attended schools with few or no other Indian kids. Both commented on how their African American and Latino classmates faced racism, but both also expressed *envy* toward their classmates of color because the African American youth had other African American youth and Latino youth

had other Latino youth. Both longed to have a cultural bond with others, to be part of a group of students with shared background and experiences in school. Schoolyard fights made an impression on Farzad, because he observed that the Black and White youth could count on their co-ethnics to back them up:

> When we would pick fights... it made me more aware of the fact that I didn't belong to a group, you know. At least the Black kids, even though there were few of them, they were pretty tight knit and they hung out together. Even though they mixed with everybody else they just had that bond.

Vishali spent her early teen years in a predominantly White public middle school in Connecticut. She found herself associating more with the White students, and like them often made derogatory remarks about her Latino classmates. But at the same time she was disparaging them, she envied them because they had other youth to speak their language. The Puerto Rican kids did not have compartmentalize parts of their ethnic identity like Vishali did. They could act out their culture in groups, such as by speaking Spanish. Lacking classmates who shared her cultural traits, Vishali felt isolated:

> I loved the fact that all the Spanish kids all spoke Spanish. Like the Puerto Ricans all spoke one language. It had been so long since I had spoken my language with kids my own age that I felt like I missed out and when I saw them talking I thought, "Wow, you are so lucky!" Because there is another way that you think, you act or feel. I missed that I didn't have that. And secondly they were different and they were proud of it and they were allowed to be proud of it. I felt that I had to fit in with the White kids. These kids didn't have to. These kids did not have to be a part of mainstream Connecticut "white bread." They were expressing their cultural identity that I did not get a chance to do.

Having others around that one can relate to, like Farzad's and Vishali's African American and the Puerto Rican peers did, was very important in terms of feeling like one belongs to

a community. Among the White classmates with whom she socialized, Vishali's sense of isolation was even more complete: "[I was] always a brown girl in a White community. The way I saw it, I was a chocolate chip in this big White ass cookie."

Conduits to Community in College

The mere *presence* of Indian Americans affected many research participants' ethnic identity development. Here it is important to make a distinction between the *presence* of Indian Americans and the availability of an Indian American *community* at the college level. When I talk about an Indian American *presence* it refers to those experiences where research participants reported that other Indian Americans were there on the campus; presence can exist even where there is no community. *Community* refers to a chosen group, whether formal (such as an ethnic student association) or informal (a consistent social group, or clique), in which all participants participate not merely for the experience of individual interaction but also for the group phenomenon. On a campus where a student organization existed but the individual research participant did not participate in it, he or she might feel an Indian *presence* without feeling part of an Indian *community*. The presence of Indian Americans on campus was felt by all research participants except for Parth, who attended Stanford in the mid-1980s before that now-heavily-South Asian campus had any appreciable Indian American population. So Parth had neither a student organization to be involved with nor close friendships with other second-generation Indian Americans.

In their approach to the presence of Indian Americans or an Indian American community, research participants generally fall into four groups. In each group, the participants' conduit (if any) to the Indian community is different.

Table 5.2. Conduits to Indian Community During the College Years.

Active Involvement in Student Org.	"Friends" (Informal Social Network)	Actively Avoided Student Org.	Chose Not to Have Indian Friends
22	9	5	4

More than half of research participants (22) reported being actively involved in campus Indian American or South Asian student organizations; of these, seven served as officers in the club. Many members of the second group — whose community of Indian Americans was found through informal networks of friends rather than through involvement in the organization — often attended functions sponsored by the student organizations. For members of both of these groups, the presence of Indian Americans meant the chance to have informal discussion with others, access to the activities of Indian American student organizations and to ethnic studies classes with an Indian or Indian American focus, and the opportunity to have Indian American friends and roommates.

The common thread among all these factors is *culture*. Research participants wanted to experience, look for, learn, and talk about Indian culture. That meant eating Indian food, performing traditional and popular dances, wearing Indian clothes to functions, or simply sharing a joke about common experience with parents' cultural hang-ups. For most research participants, college was the chance to be around more Indians more of the time than ever before. This novel experience validated their own childhood experiences, broadened their understanding of their identities and the range of other Indian American identities out there, and brought a sense of comfort that contrasted with the isolation of elementary and high school.

Those research participants in the third group — the active avoiders — had negative reactions to the Indian presence in college. Typically, they reported finding the Indian American students on their campus "too cliquish." (Anita's words.) But even those who avoided associating with the Indian crowd nevertheless had a few close, personal Indian friends to spend time with. Out of forty-one research participants, only four felt no need or desire to spend time with other Indian Americans. Deepali — whose thoughts are discussed in detail in Chapter 7 — was typical of this small cohort.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, as the Indian American student population on American college campuses reached a sort of "critical mass," ethnic and religious student organizations were created by students within the larger institutional framework of campus life. Importantly, these were the first organizations set up by the second generation on their own. Culture and religion — the building blocks of their "Indianness" — ceased being something the students *received* from their parents and became something that they created, shaped and contextualized on their own. For many, having so many Indian Americans around was a new experience. One of the other distinctive factors about these organizations is that Indian American students had an opportunity to participate in cultural and religious organizations created and led by their second-generation peers. Ravi mentioned

> exposure to Indian organizations run by students, people my age, Indian cultural festivals – run by people my age…Those things were kind of surprising to me, I gravitated toward them…I had never seen anything like that. [Earlier, in high school,] everything was run by the previous generation. Nobody [in my generation] thought of getting Indian people together for reasons that were Indian-religious festivals, cultural things, and to discuss, especially to discuss our role in the American Diaspora.

On an informal level, friends and roommates played a significant role in the lives of research participants. For Smita, living with other Indian American women in college was

> like creating that society, or creating that group of people where, once again, you feel like you are empowered and that if you step out there, you, you won't be left alone. You will always have that, that community behind you, which I really felt was lacking when I was growing up… Here are all these people being like you, [and so you] don't have to do that anymore because not only are you not alone. We're here, you know, and we will support you and, you know, we, we won't let you down.

Student participation in these organizations occurred at the social, cultural, religious and political level. The organizations sponsored what research participants described as "cultural" and "social" events throughout the year. On the cultural side they hold celebrations of Indian and Hindu holidays, such as *Diwali* and *Holi*. Social events included sporting events, dances and parties. For Binita, the Indian student organization provided a social space of acceptance that was non-existent during her adolescent years: "My involvement with the Indian Student Organization at, on campus… going to these mixers. And before, I think that whole social thing in high school, where I didn't have that social life, I think that was coming in to play." Bipin described the social experience this way: "You're hanging out with [an] unusual amount of like brown people and it's just like the numbers just grow and then I guess, I guess then you kind of realize, that you're Indian [and] that's who you're hanging out with."

For others the benefit of community was cultural. Sweta reported that Indian student organization meetings provided a forum to meet people with whom she could converse in Hindi, and to be appreciated for that skill. Through the organization, *Sangam,* she began performing Indian classical and popular dances:

> I always knew I was Indian… I was always proud. I loved being able to tell people that I could speak Hindi. They were always so impressed with that. We would go to Indian restaurants for fun, choreograph dances for school events. We did dances for Sangam, but also for other organizations cultural shows. We were everywhere.

"We were everywhere." For the first time in her life, Sweta was intensely proud of being part of something Indian. For her and for other research participants, being able to wear Indian clothing and perform for the larger community instilled a new-found sense of pride about Indian culture.

Only two research participants, Avya and Anila, mentioned student organizations gathering as South Asian Americans and Asian Americans. For both, coming together as Indians or as South Asians first meant distinguishing themselves from existing campus organizations, including those with a pan-Asian agenda:

> It was towards the end of my first year of college that we tried to organize a South Asian student group. I think the reason we decided to organize a South Asian students' group is because there weren't that many Indians. I don't think it was so political at that age. It was sort of in response to Asian American Alliance. I went to a couple of Asian American Alliance meetings and I totally felt out of place and I did not want to go back to that feeling again, so we did organize a South Asian students group. We did not want it to be totally separate from the Asian American Alliance, but we also did not want the Asian American Alliance to be this umbrella and us be underneath it. We were a separate organization and we worked with the Asian American Alliance.

For the most part, Indian American organizations focused on sponsoring social events and cultural shows. In political terms, they focused on developing a group identity, not on manifesting that identity in service to some particular cause. As a result of the novelty of being for the first time among co-ethnic peers, most Indian American

college students were more interested in cultural self-expression than in political or social-service activities.

On the other hand, those research participants who grew up with the social and cultural anchors were the exception; they were more interested in becoming politically active. As one of these "politicized" Indian Americans, Irfan expressed annoyance that the student organization was interested only in

> just hanging out with each other. So it was dichotomous, you know. The Indian student organizations they didn't always serve the purpose that I thought they should have… I thought that we should have been a lot more politically active in college. Socially, I loved it. I mean, it was great, it was fun, and I had a wonderful – I was on the board of directors, the executive panel council. But always try to get us to do more politically active stuff, and that almost always fell by the wayside, we'd rather schedule mixers and the like with other Indian student association at other colleges. And a lot of that came from pressure from parents and all. I think those kids went to college to find another Indian person to marry. And for the social aspect, it became a lot more important than the, you know the political.

From a social/cultural standpoint, conferences were student organizations writ large --- a place where research participants met others across the U.S. who had similar experiences to their own upbringings, as well as people who were nothing like them at all. Although only three of the 41 participants spoke about attending or organizing Asian American conferences, conferences for them were important in that they provided a chance to learn about broader political South Asian American issues. Many research participants attended college at a time when no Asian American Studies courses, or only a few, were offered, so it was at conferences that they could be exposed to scholarship that dealt with their communities and experiences as well as the movements of political activism on South Asian issues.

Community in Adulthood

Today all the research participants are in graduate schools or in the workforce (See Fig. 4.3). Many expressed starting to feel more strongly about retaining ethnic ties. Many of them, for example, discussed their plans for cultural maintenance such as marrying a person who is also Indian and "hopefully who even speaks the same language." Many not only talked about wanting to maintain culture but many of this group expressed concern over how exactly they were going to do this because they did not necessarily speak the language or know about traditions, "I just did them." Community plays a large role in much of what they want to do. Cultural, regional, religious and social organizations all have a part of building and sustaining a community. Research participants have informal networks that constitute another major conduit for community.

At this time, the majority of research participants (29) report maintaining an ethnic or ethnoreligious community primarily by having an informal association of friends. Ten are actively involved in — sometimes as the organizers or founders of — ethnic organizations. Just two report no connection to an ethnic or ethnoreligious community as adults (Table 5.3.).

Table 5.3. Conduits to Community During Adulthood.

Informal Social Networks	Involvement in Ethnic Organizations	No Connection
29	10	2

As was the case in college, many research participants who are not actively involved in cultural and professional organizations that cater to the second-generation population nevertheless attend events sponsored by these organizations. Organizations have become a particularly important way of finding community for Indian Americans

who are now out in the work force. Many became accustomed to having Indian people around during college, and upon discovering less easy access to an Indian community in the workplace (with the exception of the IT firms) seek it out via attendance at organizational events. Anand, for example, talked about attending NetSAP (Network of South Asian Professionals) events in the Boston areas as a way of connecting with people like himself. He works with Indians from India and goes to NetSAP events to talk with others who, like him, grew up in the U.S. Anisa and several other research participants continue to attend conferences sponsored by regional ethnic organizations, such as the annual TANA (Telegu Association of North America)conference where attendance often exceeds 10,000 people. Anisa spoke enthusiastically about the TANA conference and how good it felt "having so many more Indian friends, surrounding myself with Indian people. Surrounding myself with Indian events."

Others are critical of the organizations that "only get together to socialize." Shabnam and two other research participants are active volunteers in south Asian domestic violence organizations such as *Raksha* in Atlanta. Members of the second generation who have created organizations like *Raksha*, or who are building political advocacy organizations with an ethnic or ethnoreligious focus, represent the broadening of community's purpose beyond the mere maintenance of ethnic ties. For some, like Shabnam, the community experience and agenda are undergoing a metamorphosis, incorporating not only ethnoreligious attachments but also elements of social service and political activism. Two Boston-area research participants, Priti and Ravi, serve as mentors for Indian American high schoolers through Project IMPACT, another second-generation Indian American social service group.

As always, community in adulthood means many things to many people. For some, the mere presence of other Indians creates a sense of community that continues to feel like a refreshing contrast to the K-12 period. Girish said he feels more Indian than he used to because "of all the people I've been around in the last three years of my life. I feel more connected to it. I'm more at ease with it, [with] myself." As with other time periods, research participants during adulthood feel a sense of community where they discover other Indian Americans who had similar experiences growing up, co-ethnics with whom they can bond over shared experiences. For some, this really is a new phenomenon of adulthood; it was until her post-college years that Jaya experienced the sense of community that other research participants described during their college years.

> I have more close Indian friends than before, and I enjoy talking to them about our Indian upbringings. [I enjoy] relating to them, because I realize now that my upbringing was not an isolated thing. It was similar to others.

Alok described the transition from college to the working world as difficult because he suddenly no longer had a community. He actively sought out a community in the city where he moved after college.

> I didn't know any Indians up there but they, the people at my work predominantly White, so I just went out with them I would always ask my parents, you know, "Do you know any Indians up here?" I'd call them up and just go out or meet them.

For some research participants, community has become not merely a place to act out their culture, but also a source of responsibility to be involved and participate. For Binu,

> Indian culture would be, um, being involved in the community, whether it be myself in the Indian community or whether it be the, you know, my North Indian community, whatever it is, I think it's – I think if it's truly important, to be involved in these functions that go on in our community.

Whether it was attending *garbas* or other Hindu religious events, or speaking Malayalam in the house, or having Indian friends, for Binu this is all culture and it cannot be done without community.

> I think that's important, like surrounding yourself with, with your, with your own kind if it's – not just, um, friends – not to sound prejudice, that may not be, but definitely so you can understand other people's cultures and traditions. I mean my world only opened up as a freshman in college, only because I understand their roots, you know, I was into the, you know, learning about Islamic and Hinduism and that kind of thing, so, I definitely think that's important.

For some research participants, having a community where one could "act out" culture caused them to feel supported and nurtured. Irfan mentioned this as one of the most important parts of having a community. He feels comfortable having close Indian friends and close American friends, he says, because the latter gave him the chance "not [to] be completely, 110-percent immersed in Indian culture, but having it there to know who you were. Um, and I think the community in general was a nice source of support."

Similarily, Farzad talked about working with Ismaili youth through summer camps and talking about the support and acceptance he received from this community.

> I started to get more involved in other programs… and the more that I would get involved, the more that I would see the need. And so I think that made me much more empathetic towards kids today, [and] towards Ismailis general. And it gave me a much stronger connection with my community. I mean, it still didn't do much to tie me to religion, but it definitely made a much stronger tie to, um, our Islamic community.

Community is one of Farzad's top priorities these days:

> I've really had to focus on balancing, um, the aspect of service in my life with the professional aspect, so, you know, maybe certain jobs I might have taken had I not been involved in these youth projects, that I didn't take because I was. Um, you know, I had an arrangement with my company where if I traveled for them four days a week, I would get Friday's to do my own thing, and I would use that to be involved with these youth projects and I told them that was very important to me. So, you know, lots of times I definitely become much more – I became much more vocal about my involvement and how important it was to me and how, you know, to have the balance.

Several research participants spoke not only of having an Indian community to "hang out" with, but also with finding a balance — different for each — between socializing with other Indian Americans and socializing with non-Indians:

> I definitely spend more time with a more Indian crowd socially. I still have my friends who are non-Indian. I like that balance between the two. I get really – if I'm not with, around Indian people, I do tend to miss the culture and the experience and whatever the dynamics are there, but I also miss it on the other end, as well. If I'm around Indians the whole time, I do get tired of it. I want to kind of break away from that and see other, be with other friends and, even here, started to go back to mixing the two.

Mina also remarked that *not* having a community that she felt an attachment to made her different. In recent years she has been coming to terms with that situation.

> I think I had a lot of trouble relating to other Indians and I, I kind of felt like I wasn't Indian that way because I didn't, I wasn't raised around other Indians, didn't have any Indian friends, and so even, I mean, even to this day, I don't have a lot of Indian friends and it's really hard for me to, for some reason, make friends with Indians because … I don't feel fully comfortable because I feel like I have to play a part in – also, that's probably also because of, of it being his friends, so it's hard to, for me to kind of feel like I can be myself because I have to be liked kind of by them, so, it's, they're his friends. Um, so I think the Indian, making friends is really hard for me and kind of I felt more comfortable with my

> White friends that I just had more White friends. And, I mean, I do have some close Indian girlfriends, but it's few and far between. So I think that was probably the hardest thing, to feeling a part of a group.

At this point in their lives, my interviewees remain at various levels of being involved the community. Many are content with consumption oriented ethnicity/culture — characterized by enjoying the food, music, dance, art and other popular cultural aspects, and speaking the language. Others are satisfied with being members of "geographies of ethnicity," for example, cultivating Indian family/kin, friends and other social relationships, going to temples, mosques, other functions and participating in community events. Only a few are concerned about "producing and practicing" the communities — caring about the political future of their communities. For many of these individuals, working for the Indian American community inevitable entails a broader vision of social justice.

Second generation organizations deal with salient issues by personalizing and individualizing solutions. Although the ethnic organization can provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and an opportunity to participate in common enjoyable experiences, ultimately the way each person resolves heritage issues are the result of individual decisions. Just as the first generation was molded by the Indian cultural milieu, the second generation has been molded by its particular historical conditions. Individuals within the second generation vary in the extent to which each has internalized American and Indian sensibilities.

Although community was a conduit to Indian culture for most research participants, simply having the culture in common did not automatically mean feeling a sense of community. Community, in its full meaning, had to do with developing

relationships and engaging in cultural activities with a group of familiar people where one felt accepted.

Quantitative Data

Community, for purposes of the Card Rating inquiry, meant whatever constituted the respondent's own notion of an "Indian community." For most research participants, this meant the group of people their parents and they associated with on the weekends during the K-12 period. During college, "community" was their group of Indian friends, whether attached to a student organization or not. I explicitly allowed research participants to use different definitions of "community" during different life periods, explaining to them that their "community in college [did] not have to be associated with community during their K-12 years." The same separation of concepts of community was applied to the question when asked with regard to adulthood. As Appendix H reveals, during the K-12 years, community ranked eighth overall in terms of the importance it played in the lives of the research participants. During college and adulthood, community jumped in importance to fourth.

As research participants progressed through their lives to date, community went from being something that parents created and placed an importance on (or not) to something that the second generation itself created and fostered. Research participants who felt a connection to community during K-12 described that community as a "refuge" or "safe haven" from the predominantly-White milieu of the school environment. Those who did not have access to or interest in a community during K-12 lacked that connection, and some still feel the worse for not having had it. College was most research paraticipants' first exposure to a large population of Indian Americans their own

age, and to Indian Americans different from themselves in terms of religion, regional identity, or socio-economic class. For those who reported participating in formal or informal ethnic communities in college, those communities served the functions of validating research participants' experiences, making them feel less alone and more "powerful," and in many cases broadening their understanding of the second-generation Indian American experience. Once the research participants moved beyond the confines and easy community-building environment of the college campus, they continued to seek out opportunities to spend time with co-ethnics their own age. As young adults, most do so by having circles or friends or attending events sponsored by second-generation Indian American organizations. A relatively smaller number are actively involved as organizers or founders of such organizations. At each life stage, more research participants considered community more salient, a trend reflecting both increased access to co-ethnic communities and an increased sense that being part of such a community is a personal priority of the research participant.

Dimensions of Culture

Nieto (1996) has described culture as an ever-changing system of values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldviews created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include shared history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion, and how these are transformed by those who share them. Mindful of the fact that culture is dynamic, I discuss how culture helps to shape one's behavior, attitudes, perceptions and thoughts about one's ancestral group — and how it is re-shaped by the social context of the time. Two of the basic building blocks of ethnicity are culture and identity. In everyday social

situations, we use culture to express and give meaning to our identity. We use identity to construct affiliations with and boundaries between other individuals and groups. The complex interplay of identity and culture is a salient feature of the ethnic experiences of second-generation Indian Americans.

Here I use the term culture to mean an "Indian culture": those ideas and traditions, imparted to the research participants by their parents and other Indian immigrants, which allowed the research participants to feel a connection to Indian culture. Having said that, it is important to note that there is not monolithic "Indian" culture, and volumes have been written on the meanings of culture, particularly in the diaspora. Indian culture in the U.S. a very specific culture unique to the Indian American Diaspora; however, most of the research participants tended to have a monolithic vision of, or at least an uncritical approach to, Indian culture. For example, today, Sweta identifies as "Indian." She expresses what "Indian" culture means to her by saying, "I feel Indian and more I feel north Indian. I specifically feel Hindi speaking, *Salwar-Kurtha*-wearing North Indian." For Nija, on the other hand, Indian culture is "maintain[ing] the values that my parents gave me. I was able to uphold… I think it means that I was able to gel both cultures in the U.S."

In addition to community, research participants said they felt connected to Indian culture by attending Diwali shows or by participating in them; by taking classical Indian dance classes or language classes; by speaking their native language with family members; by watching Hindi films or reading books about India; by wearing Indian clothing and jewelry; and by eating Indian food. All of these factors are *dimensions of culture*, ways in which the research participants expressed and engaged with their culture. Culture provided a pathway for building of relationships based on commonalties.

Many of the research participants expressed a symbiotic relationship between culture and community. In other words, being involved in culture resulted in a sense of community and the community provided a way to engage in culture. The feelings of culture were transformed over time. Research participants followed different trajectories in terms of their feelings about culture. For example, during the K-12 years, the research participants felt both positively and negatively about the different dimensions of culture described here: food, clothing, dancing, and attending ethnoreligious gatherings. Once in college most of the research participants gravitated towards the various dimensions of Indian culture listed above. I decided to provide this discussion in the "Community" section because although the dimensions of culture and community are above are dialectical in nature, in order to ultimately show their relative salience in the ethnic identity development process, it was necessary to extract (to the extent possible) each from the other. It is not entirely an artificial process because the research participants often spent a great deal of time on one or two of the dimensions. During the college years, "community" and "culture" factors are inextricably linked and to separate them would be a completely artificial process; key dimensions of culture, like eating Indian food and wearing Indian clothing, were expressed when in the presence of others – in the presence of a community. In the post-college years, culture maintenance occurs as a result of research participants' own conscious efforts; some are actively seeking out knowledge to create or recreate "an Indian culture" and others are concerned transmission of culture to their children.

Social Gatherings and Ethnoreligious Celebrations

"On the weekends [there would be] a special function or dance… things that just *kept you aware of who you were* very important. I don't think it was one specific thing," said Irfan. Research participants belonged to ethnoreligious communities, and typically celebrated cultural and religious events in one space. While this is particularly true for those of Sikh, Hindu or Muslim background, it is not limited to those groups. In addition to community *per se*, as discussed in the previous section, research participants reported feeling connected to Indian culture by attending Diwali shows or by participating in them, by taking classical Indian dance classes and language classes, by speaking their native language with family members, by eating Indian food at home and at community functions, by watching Hindi films, by reading books about India, and by wearing Indian clothing and jewelry. Monali's eyes sparkled as she talked about Indian culture:

> We had Garbas, Diwali, temple, *Holi*. Any kind of function people would get together consistently. What best *salwar kameez* can I wear. The *pyle* on my feet. The *bichiya* on my toes. When you are a kid, that is how you associate. Like my *choti* with the tassel on the end, I would wear that. Whose jewelry were you wearing... Putting coconut oil on your skin and your hair. That is what I grew up with.. Eating *dahl* and rice every day. Every day.

Not all research participants were so uniformly enthusiastic about Indian culture. Every research participant talked about gathering together with other Indian people. For many, the typical gathering was a picnic or dinner. Most research participants also noted that they attended these events most of the time because their parents did not give them the option of not going. Parents were going so it was expected that the children would go. This comment by Bindu typifies most research participants' childhood experience: "Even like from a young age, and we had to go to garba or go to somebody's house for

dinner and my parents would be like, no, you have to come…when we were little, they would kind of force us." Anita's experience mirrored Bindu's: her parents always had plans for the weekends and wanted Anita and her siblings to come along. As she got older and wanted to be with her "school friends" — that is, her non-Indian friends — her parents were very strict. She said this was definitely one way she felt different from her classmates all throughout her schooling:

> [In] terms of social activities – not after school, but in the evenings, on weekends, like parties and stuff — my family was either doing Indian things, the Indian social circuit, or, um, they just didn't like us going – they didn't let us – my parents didn't want me going, so they were more strict on that end….When the whole family was out with other Indian Americans, they would often come home late, but "[w]hen I was out with a [school] friend, it would be very, like a very tight curfew."

All of these cultural experiences and factors had both positive and negative effects in the lives of research participants; indeed, many research participants described their cultural background as simultaneously positive *and* negative. The research participants spent much of their time both at school and away from school trying to understand where they fit in relation to the school culture. The power of peer culture combined with school socialization often led to research participants accepting and rejecting what aspect of their life was accepted or rejected at school. Research participants constantly measured and judged their own behavior and that of their peers through a lens of how American one is and what needs to be given up in order to be American. Girish said:

> "I wish I was an American." I mean, "I wish I was a White person." I always used to think, "I wish I was a White person. My life would be so much simpler then; I wouldn't have all these problems." That's the way I used to think about it.

Priti had similar thoughts, which had a dampening effect on her enthusiasm for school activities:

> Not times I wished I weren't Indian, but times I wished... It wasn't like a strong feeling, but... I pursued all kind of things my school. I was editor of my high school yearbook, [and] I was a cheerleader. I remember thinking I would be more accepted in those roles if I wasn't Indian. (*Q: Did any of these thoughts or ideas translate into behavior?*) Yes. I did not pursue all the leadership positions I wanted to. Like I did not run for any office in student government.

While research participants expressed a variety of reasons for wishing they were not Indian, including culture and skin color, for most their wishing related directly to cultural issues. Home life was very different from school life. More often than not, in school, ethnic culture was either not talked about or it was something that made the kids feel alienated. At home they found multiple manifestations of Indian culture; it was infused into everything, from language to food to the art on the walls. The result: the child's two mains sites of socialization, home and school, not only have different meaning for the children, they produce different, at times opposing effects. Socialization at home often validated parts of their ethnic identity, but because of the messages they receive at school the home was something the research participants often did not feel proud of. The meaning and impact of the difference varies across the research participants cohort; in general, it seems to depend at least in part upon how extreme the home is from the school. Avinash didn't feel that different, in large part because he went to a diverse school in the Philadelphia area, where he was one of many Indian American young people. Others, like Monali in Kansas, dealt with more extreme contrasts between home and school.

Most research participants chose to keep information about their home lives private from their friends at school. To a certain extent, this was just another manifestation of the childhood inclination to keep home and school separate. But for most of these Indian American research participants, it also reflected a deeper discomfort with the negative ways in which outsiders could see their home life. This is one step beyond what she described earlier- in school they were not affirmed in school now that was happening and the research participants were concerned with others' perceptions about their lives. Whether participants enjoyed going to the weekend social functions or not, it was another way research participants were different than their classmates. One of the research participants talked about how one of her school friends thought it was odd that she was going out to dinner with her parents. In high school, Bindu said she " hated like having my social life disrupted [by Indian functions]." Many participants reported adopting a "don't ask/don't tell policy"; they would never initiate a conversation at school about plans for the weekend, and they would usually stay silent when their school friends were having such a conversation. Monali's concern about having her "Indianness come out" at school was typical.

This passive approach to keeping her Indian identity hidden — the notion that discussing in school what they did on the weekend is out of the question — is typical of research respondents' comments. Only one respondent reported actively lying to her school friends about her weekend activities. She explained her deception by describing the contrast between her family and her friends: She noticed that on weekends her friends would be at home while their parents were out, and she was always out with her parents. Embarrassed by this difference, she would make up stories that she felt would make her

weekends sound more like her school friends'. Bindu was one of the few research participants who claimed to feel totally comfortable telling her classmates why she could not come out on weekends — even though she resented the impact those Indian functions had on her "school" social life:

> I was very open, I would be like, "I'm going to an Indian function, I can't go to this." … I hated when parties were happening, or I was invited for the night to go do something, and, I couldn't go because I had to do some Indian thing.

Despite the sometimes-uncomfortable contrast between their own activities and the "typical" American childhood, most research participants said they looked forward to attending Indian social and cultural functions. Irfan said this was the way he got to have an active social life with his Indian American friends: "There was always something I was going to be doing on the weekends." Cultural celebrations like these provided anchors in Indian American communities across the U.S. Whether one was talking about a large cultural organization in a metropolitan area celebrating events or a community made up of 15 families, they were critical events in the lives of research participants. Research participants especially enjoyed attending large-scale celebrations — like the Sikh holiday Vasaki, the Muslim Eid, or Hindu holidays like Diwali, Holi, and Navratri.[19] Being in that cultural space allowed research participants to feel connected to Indian culture. For example, Anila said:

> We would go to Diwali celebrations or Republic Day. There would be a show and we would go. I think when I was in high school I was in a couple of dances. And then with the BG there were dinners and picnics. I don't remember being really excited about it, it was sort of like I had to go. It wasn't like I had anything else better to do anyway.

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[19] Although cross-attendance by Muslims at Hindu events or Hindus at Muslim events was rare, several Sikh research participants talked about attending Hindu celebrations.

Attending a function did not necessarily mean sitting quietly or fully participating — whether the event was a performance, worship service or banquet. Once the research participants were at the location of the event, they could more often than not be found outside of the auditorium, "playing" or "hanging out" with others their own age. Nevertheless, the functions served to socialize research participants into Indian culture. The full experience was more than just attending a play or festival. It meant getting dressed in their *kurtha pajamas* and *salwar kameez*, donning Indian jewelry, eating Indian food, seeing the adults and hearing them speak native languages and talk about India. It was, in short, about expressing an Indianness. In Bipin's words, " I guess *Diwali* shows, like in the community, so like, again, further making me more aware of, of my background and my culture."

In college, these ethnoreligious celebrations were the main way culture was expressed by most second-generation research participants.[20] After college and going into adulthood, attendance and participation in ethnoreligious celebrations, like Diwali shows and other events continues for some like Avinash who discussed how his performance, singing songs (from Hindi popular films) was his main link to Indian culture "we had a *Holi* show and a *Diwali* show… I did it twice a year. That was really my only Indian connection… those *Diwali* and *Holi* nights kept me feeling that I was culturally involved." Overall, the research participants' attendance and participation decreased into the adult years.

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[20] See pages 92-95, above.

Food and Culinary Habits

Eating Indian food was a daily experience for all the research participants and therefore was a daily expression of Indian culture. It was one way research participants felt connected to Indian culture and a few like Sweta "loved it." Although having the delight of having Indian food for dinner on most nights was not a sentiment shared by all the research participants and actually one more way of feeling different. Priti commented, "I always felt different. At home we spoke differently, ate different food, always involved with religious groups, attend cultural program." Not one of the research participants talked about having Indian food for dinner in a "positive light." Even though Monali described her main connection to Indian culture through the food she ate at home, she did not enjoy eating the food unless she was in India.

> When you go to a place like Syracuse, Kansas, you are automatically picked out as different and on top of that when friends would come to my house it was a different household, different kind of smell. I hated Indian food when I was a child, not because I didn't like it, I would eat it as soon as I went to India.

Many research participants recalled feeling alienated and "weird" because they had Indian food for dinner and not what their friends at school were having for dinner. Anila commented,

> I really thought of the differences in terms of food. The kids would talk about things like, "What did you eat last night?" And people would say "macaroni and cheese" and I would never now to describe the food I ate.

Food was one more way that research participants like Anila negated their ethnic identity. Individuals quickly learned that they did not want to share eating Indian food with their classmates. Priti recalled, "I remember feeling different after second grade because I would bring different food I my lunchbox." For Smita her issue surrounding

eating Indian food, went beyond the actual cuisine at home. It was about the whole process, the type of food eaten and the way they ate at home.

> When I went to my friend's house for dinner. They're eating spaghetti and meatballs and bread, and then, you know, I come home and we're eating Indian foods with our hands, you know, and it's just – the stark contrast was amazing, you know.

The "accepted" norm was too eat spaghetti and meatballs with a fork and knife and not *rotlis* (bread) and *shak*(vegetables) with one's hands. It was not only the type of food eaten, the way that it was eaten, but also the "smells" that exuded from the spices that flavored the food. Anya commented "I mean there were certain times when friends would come over and they would come to ask me what I was eating and the *smells,* things like – little things like that that kind of made me different." Authors have often noted second-generation Indian American kids wanting American food because they do not like Indian food (Mogelonsky, 1995). In simply saying that people are not seeing the process that the kids are going through. The child wanting American food does not mean he/she does not like Indian food, but in most cases is rejecting it because it is not "normal" food.

During adulthood, Indian food becomes part of this "cultural package." Even Indian food took on a different importance than when talked about during pre-college and college times. Vishali mentioned how when cooking Indian food it helped to feel at peace and it was a way of doing something Indian.

> There is something there. I do not know if it is something that my brain is creating or something that we truly long for. It is interesting. I do feel that I am more Indian when I cook Indian food.

Indian food took on a different importance than when talked about during pre-college and college times. Now it is talked about as something most people long for. For a few some of their only connection to Indian culture – talk about missing it.

Wearing Indian Clothing

Most students in school are concerned about clothing and Indian Americans are no different whether they are dressing for school or for religious and cultural functions. Research participants recalled their mothers encouraging them to wear Indian clothes on the weekends and adorning the girls in jewelry. Most research participants complied with their parents' wishes or they themselves were quite eager to wear the clothes. Both girls and boys recalled wearing it occasionally on weekends to cultural and religious functions. Although a few male research participants mentioned wearing Indian clothes, it was definitely more prominent in the lives of the female research participants.

Wearing Indian clothes allowed a connection to Indian culture for some and for others caused feelings of rejection by American culture. Several research participants like Sweta "loved *dressing up* in Indian clothes."[21] It was something that occasionally and it made her feel special. Binu described not being bothered by the idea that non-Indian people would see her wearing Indian clothes:

> I never minded wearing *salwars*. I would wear them to Indian parties and was fine with it, like even if after wards some of us went to the mall or whatever. I didn't mind. I was not self-conscious of it or anything.

In contrast, Priti received a strong negative reaction when she wore a *salwar* to school:

> Sometimes I would even wear Indian clothes to school and I remember people reacting very strongly to the way I looked. I remember wearing a

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[21] Emphasis added.

> *salwar kameez*. I remember feeling different because my home life was so, so different from school life.

As with all other factors that have been discussed, Indian clothes was not always a positive aspect of one's life. Saleena discussed her embarrassment when she went to Indian cultural functions because she did not have the proper clothes like everyone else. "This is the time we started going. I remember being embarrassed because we did not have Indian clothes, my sister and I. That is when we first started going so we did not have the clothes and things." She did not want to go back to functions – i.e., engage in Indian culture – until she had the proper attire. Mahesh was "really bothered if mom wanted me to wear Indian clothing." Anya described

> moments of being embarrassed. I think anytime I wear Indian clothes and I go out in public, I am more comfortable now, but I am super self-conscious about it. It is a constant struggle in my head. There is still something of a feeling, when someone is staring at me.

In college, clothing was a central part of ethnic cultural expression because the culture shows were the primary cultural vehicle in people's lives. Both male and female research participants talked about wearing Indian clothing to ethnic association events in college. *Not* wearing the clothing became a way for research participants *not* to associate with (or feel attachment to) Indian culture. Satish said: "I'm still not the person that likes – like I still – I never ever wore like *kurthas* and stuff like that and I still don't think I'm into that."

Some participants, mostly women, mentioned as Avya did, "not having enough opportuntunties to wear Indian clothing." Not everyone feels comfortable wearing the clothing. Those like Priti who had negative experiences regarding wearing clothing when they were young and who have also had negative experiences in recent years are sometimes hesistant about wearing the clothing:

> There was a time when a friend of mine and I were dressed in Indians clothes. And we were crossing the street and some people yelled, "why are you dressed like that? It isn't Halloween!" I remember being really mad at that.

Watching Hindi Films

With the invention of the VCR in the 1970's and 1980's, Hindi popular films and televised serials came into Indian American homes. "Bollywood"[22] is the world's largest film industry, and Hindi movies — even the poor-quality bootlegs that were available to Indian Americans early in the VCR age — help maintain economic, cultural, and social ties between the Indian homeland and its diaspora around the world. Thus research participants and their parents were able to stay "in touch" with the homeland by renting videos. Hindi movies are a form of escapism for all viewers; for research participants, it was that and more – it was a conduit for learning about Indian culture. As discussed in the Language section, below, the only connection to Indian culture Monali could get in Kansas was Hindi movies rented from Chicago, 250 miles away. Monali described herself as an "avid Hindi film watcher... I would watch Hindi movies in secret."

For Monali, the unwilling Kansan, Hindi movies were a source of personal validation, of the message that one could be brown *and* beautiful: "I could watch these films and see someone who looked like me. On some level that is how I knew I was pretty too." Seeing Indian dress portrayed as glamorous and beautiful, and hearing Indian-style music create the cinematic drama on screen, gave many research participants their only exposure to Indian culture as "cool." (Being American, after all, meant dressing like an American and not wearing styles from other nations and cultures.) Although the discussion is about dress and beauty, it is also fundamentally about skin

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[22] An amalgam of "Bombay" and "Hollywood."

color and race. This is a particularly salient issue for the girls; while a few male research participants mentioned watching Hindi movies and therefore had a connection to Indian culture, the women really discussed in detail how they were affected by the films. The films provided insight on the norms, beliefs and values of what was accepted, rejected and considered ideal. The films were a large part of the socialization process for those who watched them. The notion of beauty was effectively conveyed in the films — but in a way that was positive for some and negative for others. Compare Monali's experience with that of Deepali:

> When I was little, like there was a lot of pressure to have straight hair, but that was oddly all internal to the Indian community because you know when like you watch the Indian movies, the women all have uniform, stick-straight hair, and I'm sure some of that pressure there also is just the idea that you want to look less ethnic and more White, like, you know, the aesthetic in the Indian community is the paler and whiter you look, so there was a lot of – like I remember when I was younger, I felt sort of bad, it was like, "oh, I wish I had straighter hair like my sister or my mom," and I'd – but that was all like internal to the family, not necessarily outside.

For Sweta, movies were how she learned and retained her language ability:

> *Yes!* I was so absorbed in Hindi films and listen to Hindi songs all the time. Like all the time. And because of that I am totally fluent in Hindi now. I don't read it or write it as well [but I] can carry on conversation with anybody.

Movies provided a jumping-off point for dialogue between research participants and their parents about Indian culture and the family's own history. Sweta continued:

> That would stem my interest in other things, like watching the movie I would then say, like, "Mom, did you have an arranged marriage?" Things I did not know about I would see reflected in the movie and I would ask my mom about them. I loved dressing up in Indian clothes and I have always loved Indian food. I definitely felt like I was very Indian, which is weird, since I also grew up feeling isolated.

Hindi movies could be a vehicle for cultural retention even where research participants did not have access to (or chose not to participate in) other cultural outlets. Avinash, for example, said "I didn't identify with the Indian culture very much. But yeah, I watched movies."

During college, some like Monali continued watching Hindi movies, others watched them for the first time – mostly because their friends were watching them and so they started also. This was Binu's experience. Growing up she had always been very proud of her Malayali culture. She began hanging out with her "North Indian friends in senior year of high school… It was in college that I started watching Hindi movies." Beginning to watch Hindi movies connected with her also starting to learn Hindi and other associating with the other dimensions of culture.

In recent years, technology: DVD player and the Internet have changed movie watching habits of second-generation Indian Americans. A few of the research participants talked about how they did not like Hindi movies when they were young because the tapes were of poor quality or because they did not understand Hindi. They went on to say that now they watch them because the images (and the storylines) have improved dramatically and it has become another way to learn Hindi. As popular films have increasingly become part of life for many research participants, more expressed familiarity with the clothes, the actors and actresses and particularly the music of Bollywood. It is through songs in Hindi films that many have continued to learn and improve Hindi speaking and comprehension skills. Avya (who is Bengali) owns several Hindi DVD's such as *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. She watches them on a fairly regular basis and talked about how they help her increase her vocabulary and comprehension of Hindi.

She and other research participants discussed how they started learning Hindi while watching Hindi movies. Others, like Bindu, who previously was somewhat detached from ethnic Indian culture and "came upon in" during college now says, "I come home now and I mean I've heard some Hindu pop music sometimes that my dad will play [a tape] and I'm like, 'I want a copy of that tape.'"

Hindi movies exert an influence on those who don't watch the films. Avinash mentioned during his K-12 years, that watched Hindi films and continued to do so in college. Nowadays, although he does not watch the films he keeps up with the songs and performs songs and dance when he gets an opportunity. "I still keep up with movies, although not as much as I did when I was a little kid." Even the research participants who don't necessarily watch Hindi movies, know the characters, songs and often perform the dances from the movies during the various ethnoreligious celebrations such as Avinash. Singing songs (from Hindi popular films) was his main link to Indian culture.

More research participants watch and keep up with Hindi films today than did during the K-12 years.

Reflections on Dimensions of Culture in Adulthood

By the time most of the research participants completed college, they had started to think about marriage and children which also got them thinking about maintaining culture for themselves and their children. Several talked about how, they wanted to marry a co-ethnic and "hopefully the person will speak the same language."[23] Toward the end of college and into the post-baccalaureate years, Irfan and others had adult conversations about : " how do you want to pass on your language, culture to your kids,

[23] Having the same religions was not explicitly stated, but most of them implicitly said it.

things of that nature. Dating was much more of an issue, you're at the age now where, you know, trying to get set up with other Indian girls."

The transmission of particular traditions and allegiance to their children is the goal of many research participants. Though many have expressed concern as to exactly how they will accomplish this. Nija – " no uncle to do this, we are all going to be uncle and aunties and we don't know this stuff." People wanted to be more knowledgeable so they would be able to continue the celebrations and pass on the culture. Mina said that before she did not think twice about culture, "..it was kind of by default, well, I look Indian, so, you know, people, I imagine, think I am." In recent time, she and her husband have been thinking about children and transmission of culture.

> But [I] want to be more knowledgeable about the language for our children, I'd like to be able to speak it, but I'm kind of just realistically thinking I probably won't be able to pass that down myself, but hopefully my family will be able to. I'm kind of happy about the clothes and some of the cultural things.

Trips to India

Based on the data collected, it is evident that trips to India and research participants' relationships with relatives in India served to create, reinforce and fortify a connection to Indian culture that affected the identity development process.

It is worth presenting the data chronologically here because there are major shifts in the frequency and impact of trips to India in the lives of research participants. Trips to India, particularly during the K-12 life period, were products of parents' wishes. For parents, trips to India as an opportunity to immerse their children in the Indian culture they'd left behind, and to expose them to the culture of the extended family — the "uncles" and "aunties" with whom they had played as children. As the following chart

demonstrates, 60 percent of research participants traveled to India at least four times before finishing high school and one in five went every summer or every other summer (7 or more trips):

Table 5.4. Trips to India during K-12, as Reported by Research Participants.

Number of trips	**0**	**1-3**	**4-7**	**8 or more**
Frequency *(number of research participants)*	3	14	19[24]	5

- **During K-12**

Of the 40 research participants who went to at India at some point in their lifetime,[25] 38 had gone by the time they finished high school.[26] Eight were sent there by their parents every summer or every other summer, 27 made trips every two or three years, and just four made fewer than three trips to India before age 18.

Some of the research participants spoke about their trips rather matter-of-factly. "It was something that was done," Sarvesh deadpanned. He reported going to India every two or three years and described it as an "obligation" (read "a chore"). In contrast, for Anand, the trips were an enjoyable and positive experience: "Going to India very couple of years, I really enjoyed that." Anya "loved going" back to Kashmir, in northern India, which had a similar climate to her home in Massachusetts, and particularly enjoyed the attention she received: "I had lots of family. You get a lot of attention, grandparents

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[24] Includes two research participants, Girish and Saleena, who spent a full year studying in India. This year is counted as only one trip. See discussion in text to follow.

[25] Saleena and her family are from South Africa. She returned to South Africa to visit relatives but has never traveled to India.

[26] Farzad and Hussan went to India for the first time in adulthood. During his K-12 life period, Farzad traveled to Uganda, where his parents had lived before immigrating to the United States and where he still has many relatives in today.

really dote on you. The temperature was the same as over here, so it was easy to be there. We used to go every two years."

Seventeen of the forty-one research participants explicitly mentioned how trips to India during their K-12 years provided them with a sense of connection to Indian culture. Asked what made him feel a connection to Indian culture, the first thing Anand did was to begin describing his trips to India. Shabnam said her "13 or 14" childhood trips to India "definitely helped solidify my identity as an Indian." Several research participants, like Avinash, remarked that "going to India more than anything else" created a sense of connection to Indian culture. There were two main pathways to Indian culture on these trips to India:

1. **Language development and retention.** Trips to India provided an opportunity to refresh and build language skills. While there, research participants were often forced to speak the family language out of necessity. Vinay remarked,

> I think my trips to India helped a lot. I think that's probably the biggest [way in which visiting India created a sense of connection to the culture,] because I had at least some understanding of the language and, uh, listened to people's conversations that way and picked up a lot.

2. **Spending time with family.** It was in India that a number of research participants developed relationships with their cousins and their grandparents, which they said helped them maintain a sense of connection to Indian culture.

Whether they were positive or negative experiences, research participants' trips to India created a connection to Indian culture. It is impossible and not very worthwhile to make a distinction between those who enjoyed the trips and those who did not. Some of

the research participants recounted being miserable before they ever left U.S. soil, because they didn't want to go to India, but that once in India they had a good time. Others often spoke about not enjoying it due to illness or the unsanitary or "sub-standard" living conditions in India; the omnipresent and highly visible poverty in India — even when it was not experienced by research participants' own relatives there — was a dramatic contrast to the living conditions the research participants were accustomed.

Still other female and male research participants discussed the restrictions when they were in India with their families. Sina reported always having to be with family not being able to go out or travel by herself: "I did not look forward to it until I got there. The main purpose for going was to see family. I had a lot of restrictions there. I wasn't allowed to do a lot of things there."

The attitude of some of the research participants changed with age. Some who did not enjoy going to India as young children and pre-teens found the experience grew on them once they hit their teenage years. In Bipin's words, "when I was younger, I hated going because I would just get sick and like I just thought it was boring. But after I got more mature and like I realized the value of it and liked it." Others didn't enjoy the trips more as they aged, but were more willing to put up quietly.

Three research participants described finding "refuge" in their trips to India; for them, going to India meant going to a place and finding acceptance, comfort and respect. Everything that felt negative about their lives in America — from skin color to food — became a positive in India. Whenever she traveled to India during elementary school, Anisa said, she "never wanted to come back. Everyone looked like me. Everyone wore

the same clothes I did. Everyone ate the same food that I did. Religion was the same. No one questioned."

Monali's annual trips back to India provided her "major doses of Indian culture" after her family moved from New York to Kansas, where at the time there were "no other Indian families for 200 miles." India was a place where Monali could do the things that made her feel different from others in Kansas, like eat Indian food: "When friends would come to my house it was a different household, different kind of smell. I hated Indian food when I was a child, not because I didn't like it… I would eat it as soon as I went to India." For Monali, with the exception of her grandfather performing puja every morning, the move from New York to Kansas at age ten deleted all that was Indian in her life. Returning to India meant returning to a place where she had the culture and it was okay. Going to India "was my mother's way of saying you have to back with your culture. Once a year we would take a trip. It would only be for two weeks. But that two weeks it was great."

Some research participants were very curious about India and missed living there much that they sought every opportunity to go back. Sina spent her seventh grade year in India: "[My] parents decided to send me. I am not sure why. Maybe because I was becoming too Americanized and was not focused enough on my studies."

Girish spent his seventh grade year at a boarding school in his mother's hometown – something he had taken the initiative to request of his parents. After spending summers there, Girish wanted to experience some thing he felt he missed out on living in the U.S.:

> My cousin was telling me about things they do in all of the holidays, like *Holi* and everything and how they celebrate everything. And deep down

> inside, [I] felt like I'll never get to see these things because there's no way I can come to India during like every holiday. There's just – it's not possible with school and everything… I would just give anything to come and live here for a year to experience these different holidays and what, like all our religious stuff, to see what it's like… I [told my parents I] want to go live in India for a year and they just stopped the car. They were like are you crazy, do you know what you're talking about? I said I want to go to the same boarding school my cousin goes to, to live there for a year… So my parents thought about it and then my dad sat me down and told me, he's like, listen, we'll do this because we think it's good that you'll at least learn stuff about where you're from and all our holidays and religious festivals and everything.

For some research participants, the issue was not whether they liked going to India or not; their issue was one of belonging. Ravi recalled feeling like "a fish out of water over there. I felt very American." Mina, like Ravi, did not feel like she fit in when in India even though all the messages she received living in the U.S. said otherwise:

> I think going to India was kind of an eye-opener for me because when I was here, it seemed like I'm in my own world, and I don't look at myself like either Indian or not. I just look at myself as an individual, and I kind of look at others like that. But there was a time when I realized, oh people look at me, they see someone of color and they see like a minority and never, and I always think wherever I go, I have this stamp on me, and they have these preconceived notions of who I am and what my family does or my intelligence, or just whatever their stereotypes are. They have that. And I've been trying to be more aware of that. I think that was just going to India and realizing that, well, I'm not like them at all, like the Indians in India, but I'm kind of my – we're different that way, but then I think people here don't consider that to be the case. They think, well, they're Indian and, and just from that country, and they have their own stereotypes. I think that was kind of disturbing to realize that. So going to India was big, was a big eye opener, always you realize what you have there and what you don't.

Even Girish, despite spending his seventh-grade year at his cousin's boarding school there, continued to have similar feelings:

> I always felt I didn't belong there either because I'm not really an Indian because I'm growing up in America and I don't share the same views, the

> beliefs, and the things we do, I don't do the same things. And so I always felt like I was stuck in the middle somewhere and didn't really have a place.

Others said they felt even more alienated in India than they did in the U.S. Culturally, Indian American young people like Smita could also feel left out by their own families:

> It was very hard for me because, by then, like all my cousins were still in India and the bond that they had all formed was so incredibly tight that I think it was the first time that I realized what I had missed out on growing up in the United States versus growing up in India in terms of family. And it really hurt, you know, because here were all my cousins, we're kind of all within the same age…and they're all so tight and they can speak the same language… And it was not something I had ever experienced.

- **During College**

Only half the research participants — 19 of 41 — traveled to India during their college years. This fifty percent drop-off from K-12 reflects both a life-stage change and the beginning of research participants' becoming travelers to India only on a *self-selecting* basis. Growing up, none of the research participants really had a choice about trips to India: "If mom and dad say we're going, we're going!" The decline in travel to India when participants reached the collegiate life stage thus represents two factors: (1) the interference of academic and professional responsibilities, such as summer school and pre-professional summer internships, and (2) their feeling and exercising the option *not* to travel to India if they didn't want to.[27]

Many of the themes found among high-schoolers continued in the college-age cohort. Many continued to see India as a refuge or "fall-back" place, somewhere they

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[27] This is not to say that the 22 research participants who did not go to India during college all didn't want to. Several, including Irfan and Shiren, said they wanted to go but felt that their academic or pre-professional obligations needed to take priority.

could go and be fully comfortable in their culture and language, where they would never have to explain their mother's clothes to a White person. Anya said it this way: "I think it was great that I grew up here but have the cultural identity, have something to fall back on, instead of be just American."

Although a handful of research participants continued to see family trips to India as a duty rather than a choice (Sarvesh, for example, felt an obligation to visit his ailing grandfather there), the college period for most was when trips to India became a matter of personal choice. There's really no such thing as, "I *have* to take this summer internship," but stateside opportunities like that could easily become one's excuse for not making the annual trip "home." Because travel to India now meant making a personal choice rather than merely surrendering to the family will, research participants' choices on the subject set the tone for their post-college approach to Indian travel, as we shall see shortly.

Two of the forty-one participants participated in study abroad programs to India during college. For both individuals, being able to go to India separate from going with family to see other relatives enabled them to discover new part of India and Indian culture — to not just "go home again." Shabnam talked about traveling to different cities and learning about the history and different types of people, instead of going to her hometown in South India: "It helped me reclaim a lot of things."

Avya spent six months in India on a study abroad program. Living away from her family brought on new challenges and learning opportunities. Ironically, she discovered that in India many people did not even think she was Indian due to her physical features:

> When I went there and thought that nobody (a) thought I was Indian. Everyone thought I was from Israel because of the way I look, and (b) I can't speak Hindi like that, I speak Kannada. So the question of wanting to go back and be apart of this majority was like this revenge feeling.

> After everything that has happened to me [in high school] I wanted to go back and be apart of the majority finally, it was kind of like this revenge feeling. It was kind of ridiculous… But I went there and I did not like it because I was still a minority cause everyone could tell I was American and/or Israeli. Everyone was like, "Shalom madam, how are you?" You know? It just did not work like I thought it would. That's when I realized all of the ethnic kind of bipolar thing I grew up with was so valuable as a part of me; there was no way to let that go.

For Avya, collegiate trips to India were an extension of her decision to major in religion, which is discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

- **During Adulthood**

During the adult life stage, the number of research participants going to India increases again. In adulthood, most of the research participants fell into one of three groups: (1) For those who had been to India frequently through their childhood and college years, going to India during adulthood solidified a sense of connection to Indian culture. (2) For most of the research participants who had not been to India for a long time, the experience felt more like a tourist's experience. (3) For others, the adult return to India became a "spiritual journey," upon which I will elaborate in Chapter 5.

Many of those in the first group were among the individuals who had gone most often during the K-12 period, and who continued to go through college. For them, a continuity of feeling connected to Indian culture; the more they've gone, the stronger their sense of having a bond to Indian culture. Those who talked about adult trips to India talked mostly about visits with family and spending time talking to elders. Those who have gone all along have seen India change — economically and socially — over the past decade. They are less likely to see it as this "quaint," "exotic" place or as the "wonderful" homeland their parents described to them, an idealized India uninformed by

having experiences in the real India of today. Group two, by contrast, includes most of the research participants who did not go to India in college, a choice many made because they hadn't enjoyed their trips as children. These participants spoke of their adult trips to India much as tourist might; they spoke of "seeing the sights," and while they visited family few spent time describing their relationships with Indian relatives.

Interestingly, virtually all of the research participants — even those who have not been back to India for a decade or more — expressed some sentiment like this one from Jaya: "I have somewhere else to call homeland. You know, I actually have somewhere I can go and say, 'this is my people.'" For research participants in group two, however, the experience has been very different.

Many of those in group two —whose travel to India during adulthood was their first time there in many years — often experienced frustration. Research participants like Binita went to India expecting to "fit in… You know, I'm getting to a point where I think I'm really comfortable with who I am and, you know, and I really appreciate my culture and then, and then I go to India." She said she quickly discovered, "I'm not Indian. Like, you know, I'm, you know, an NRI, non-resident Indian, or I'm, you know, American." Assuming she would fit in and be accepted, Binita instead felt rejected in India – an experience she described in terms similar to those who experienced the "non-belonging" phenomenon during K-12.

> It's interesting, you know, you go back and you think, I feel really Indian and then [you actually] go[] back and you're like you're not Indian at all, you know. I wouldn't even know, how to live in their place.

Several research participants, like Irfan and Jaya, whose life partners are non-Indians, discussed taking the their spouses to India. Both said they wanted

their spouses to meet their extended family and to "see India," and both described the trips as positive experiences.

> We toured on our own and I think that was the hardest part because Indians, even though they know you're Indian, they still want to take advantage of you because they know you're American. So we, you know, we constantly felt our defenses up, but it was great because we did see a lot of the countryside.

Unique among research participants because she went for an extended period, Anila spent a year after college living and studying in India. She went there with the goal of improving her Hindi language skills and experiencing India beyond the confines of her family, as Shabnam had in college. Anila had always been able to converse in Hindi and after living in Delhi, on her own in student housing, she said her Hindi improved and she felt "that I have a different connection to India, not just my relatives."

Language

Table 5.5. Distribution of Research Participants, by Family Language.

Family Language	# of Research Participants
Gujarati	16
Hindi/Punjabi	6
Hindi	3
Marathi	3
Tamil	3
Kannada	2
Bengali	2
English	1
Malayalam	1
Kashmiri	1

Several hundred languages and dialects are spoken in India, and this language diversity is reflected in and affects the language retention of second-generation Indian Americans. Language has multiple roles in the lives of individuals. As a symbol of a set of features that distinguish one group from another, language separates people. By the

same token, language is also used to unite people. The norms and values of a culture are expressed through language.

The ethnoreligious communities that most research participants belonged to established weekend classes to teach Indian language(s) to the research participants' generation. Eight (20%) research participants attended these "Saturday-" and "Sunday-school" language classes. "I went to Indian cultural school… on Sunday mornings, the first hour was language, the second hour was culture," said Anisa.

Research participants whose families hailed from North India were often exposed to their regional language and Hindi, one of the two national languages of India, English being the second. However, because of the linguistic diversity of their ethnoreligious communities, even those research participants who lived near many other Indian American families tended still to speak in English with their co-ethnic friends because they did not share a home language. For example, when a research participant who spoke Gujarati at home spent time with her friends who spoke Bengali, they could communicate only in English.[28]

When I asked the research participants what kind of role language had in their lives in the quantitative (card-rating) section of the interview, language invariably ended up at or near the bottom of participants' salience rankings. In the aggregate data for the K-12 years, language ranked 11th of the 12 factors. It dropped to last place during the college years, and rose only to 10th of 12 during the adult life period. The qualitative data from the interviews, however, reveals a very different picture. Every one of the 41

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[28] This phenomenon differs from that of other second generation Asian American ethnic groups, like the second-generation Korean Americans in Hong and Min's (1999) study — particularly those who lived in ethnic enclaves — who spoke Korean with their friends.

participants talked about the role(s) – positive or negative – that language had played or was playing in their lives.

During the K-12 years, speaking one's family language was a source of pride for a few research participants, but for most it was a source of embarrassment or humiliation. Whether participants felt positive or negative feelings overall about speaking another language, all the research participants were at some point embarrassed that an Indian language was associated with them.

The two key reasons many research participants noted as the reason they felt negatively about their home language were (1) because they saw parents ridiculed or discriminated against for speaking with an accent or having trouble expressing themselves in English, and (2) because they were embarrassed because having that association with another language made them different from their peers at school. Most of the research participants' parents were not native speakers of English; rather, they had learned English to varying levels of proficiency in India and improved their English ability after immigrating, but virtually all still speak with an accent. Most research participants recalled their parents' receiving poor treatment because of language — at the hands of impatient check-out clerks and name-challenged *maitres d'*, for example. At some level, the participants internalized an association between speaking an Indian language and suffering that kind of negative treatment.

The result for most during the K-12 life period was that they "rejected" their home language. When in school, most research participants did not acknowledge knowing another language; outside of the home, very few felt comfortable speaking it or having it spoke to them. Mahesh, now embarrassed at his adolescent behavior, recalled

> We spoke Gujarati at home, [and] when I was little I was fluent. [But] when my mom would speak to me [in Gujarati] in public, I was really embarrassed by that. I would say, "What? What are you saying?" I would pretend that I did not understand.

For Mahesh, having this "weird" other language (Gujarati), in his life was embarrassing. Smita – who described reactions that are typical of a large number of research participants – described similar feelings and said she rejected using it and was unwilling even to try to understand it when it was spoken to her. For her it was one more way of being different from her White American friends:

> My parents speak Gujarati in the household… They tried to speak with us then. I just wouldn't have anything to do with it, because nobody else was doing it. I really rejected that way of life. I knew I was different. I felt it every day.

While language had the effect of making some research participants feel uncomfortably different from their White peers (with the result being a negative effect on their identity), language provided a sense of connection to Indian culture and family for other participants. These participants described language having positive effect on their identities. After moving to a small town in Kansas at age 10, Monali kept her "Indian world" separate from her "American world." She disliked being Indian when at school but she loved the Indian culture she had at home. She came alive when talking about language in this context:

> I understand Hindi completely. I understand six different dialects of Hindi: Sindhi, Marvadi, Marathi, Gujarati, Datki. I speak Hindi. If you give me two weeks in India I would speak everything. I have grammatical issues. I understand a lot of Urdu. I can follow Pakistani plays. I watch Hindi movies. [When in high school,] I tried to learn to read and write but it was extremely hard.

A few other participants also recalled that knowing their home language made them feel closer to their family and closer to Indian culture. For Binu, it helped build cultural pride and helped her maintain connections with her family back in India: "I have been going back to India every two years…The language spoken at home is Malayalam… we are a very close-knit family. So I think all of that has led me to say proudly that I am Indian."

Most research participants who talked about their own facility with the language[29] said that they experienced some loss in college. This "loss" occurred due to lack of regular exposure to the home language; participants reported having few or no friends who spoke the same home language, spending less time with family and in the family home, and traveling to India less frequently or not at all. Anita's story is typical:

> Since I have moved out of the house from actually college on, I, I don't even hear it [Gujarati] as much. I don't watch Hindi movies…. and [in] my group of Indian friends, no one speaks Gujarati. Not everyone's Gujarati or not everyone knows Hindi. We all speak in English, so... It's kind of – it's been English the whole time.

A few research participants, on the other hand, took it upon themselves during college to learn to speak, read, and/or write a specific Indian language. Sweta and Irfan took Hindi classes in college, and Sarvesh took Tamil.[30] Sweta said her language skills were better during the college years than they are today. Irfan learned how to read and write Hindi in college. Today he tries to speak Gujarati. Sarvesh says he can read a Tamil-language newspaper "very slowly" and finds it difficult to speak the language,

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[29] Since I was most interested in how the research participants saw their linguistic ability, I did not collect any data that specifically asked them to list the frequency of use or fluency of their family language. Four of the research participants described themselves as fluent.

[30] It should be noted that most U.S. universities did not offer any Indian languages classes at the time when research participants were in college. In the last five or six years we have seen more universities begin offering Hindi, Tamil, or some of the major regional languages like Gujarati. In most cases, these language courses have come about only after student protests.

but that he will if he has too and that he continues to understand most of the spoken Tamil he hears.

Today, as adults, research participants express two overwhelming feelings with regards to language: a sense of urgency, and regret. They are concerned that they don't speak or understand their home language, because language could provide a link with the family for communications with grandparents and relatives in India. Anisa remarked: "I taught myself how to read and write last summer…. She [Anisa's grandmother] does not speak English. So I have been practicing so that I can communicate with her." Anisa is typical of those research participants who since finishing college have striven to maintain – or, in many cases, actively learned how to read/write or speak – the family language as a way of communicating with grandparents and other relatives in India. Fifteen research participants (9 women and 6 men) reported wanting to maintain or improve their language skills, either to communicate with their families ("the past") or to pass the language on to their children ("the future"). As a link to the past, research participants are now recognizing, language could be a key tool for cultural maintenance.

Nearly everyone who was once embarrassed by having another language, rejected having another language, or spoke badly about it during the K-12 period now expresses a profound sense of regret. Among the approximately one-third of research participants who were never forced or encouraged to learn as children, Bindu's refrain was typical: "I wish my parents had made me learn."

Today, not being able to communicate in one's family language limits access to participation in activities and affects the formation of social relationships. Smita

discussed, with profound sadness, not being able to participate in and follow the conversations at family gatherings when everyone is talking in Gujarati.

> I desperately want to say something, but my masi [aunt] doesn't really speak English that well, and for me to try to say something would totally interrupt the flow of conversation or whatever. So, I do just sit there and I feel so different, you know, just not fitting in with the group. They love me. I know that. They would do anything for me, as I would for them. But times where it's like, you know, family get-together, and, you know, and I can't understand the conversation or whatever, that's hard. And I do feel uncomfortable and everyone's like why don't you know Gujarati better, or why didn't I realize that it would have been really important for me to learn this growing up because now it's hard.

Because she does not speak Gujarati, not only can Smita not communicate with her extended family and participate in the banter at family gatherings, but consequently she feels different and "left out" for not being able to speak the language. For her and for others, this effect is not only a matter of the here and now – of being able to speak and socialize with family – but also was part of the larger issue of cultural identity.

During the adult years, research participants have come to see language as even more than a connection to the past: as a way to connect with one's future. Many research participants are now thinking about marriage and family. Most of these participants talked about the importance to them of maintaining their family language as way of having and passing along to their children a connection to family, community and Indian culture.

Some research participants are taking steps to learn and retain their family language. Bindu, never forced or encouraged to speak Gujarati, now seeks out situations where she can hear Gujarati and attempt to speak. "I can only speak but one percent of the language, you know. And I can definitely understand everything completely... I voluntarily want to be with my parents' friends... I like having conversations with them."

Living in the high tech world, Irfan and his wife are using a CD-ROM to improve their Gujarati so they can then teach it to their children. Making sure his children can speak Gujarati is very important to him because he said it was "tough" not really being able to communicate with his grandparents.

More than for most factors, research participants' attitudes on language have "done a 180°" since the K-12 life period. What was once one of their parents' most "embarssing" traits has become something that they struggle to learn, or despair at having forgotten. Most now see the home language as something they want to pass along to their children; fewer have the facility with their home language to actually be able to do so.[31]

Family

The Card-Rating factor "Family" was an interesting one. Based on the quantitative data alone, *family* — a concept which included parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, and often grandparents — was the most influential factor of all. Most research participants assigned family a value of "4" or "5" quickly, almost without thinking. I believe in many cases this is because research participants, faced with an Indian questioner (me) and knowing how important family is "supposed to be" in Indian culture, provided an "obligatory" answer. I conclude this because the quantitative data reveals a very different picture of family. Most of the references to parents during the K-12 years was either a reference to having to attend a community/cultural function or a reference to

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[31] Language is an important component in maintaining an ethnic subculture (Waters, 1990). Examining documentation about immigrant youth, shows widespread patterns of language loss. As English speakers they abandon their home language for a variety of reasons. Most immigrant families do not consider this possibility, and note too late that the loss has occurred. Being bilingual in a putatively monolingual society diminishes one's ease with and ability to think in one's native language – a loss not only of specific words but also a connection to the rituals, festivals and family relationships that are sustained through language (Olsen, 1997).

conflict where the parents and their second-generation children were at odds. This is not to say that parents did not play a very important role; they did, and often mothers and fathers were mentioned as those who influence the research participants the most. But then during the college years, when all but a few research participants were living away from home, the pattern of "4's" and "5's" was largely repeated. Most research participants mentioned parents or siblings in this period only when referring to school holidays spent at home; when they used the word "family" during the college years, research participants wree more likely to be referring to their family members in India in the context of a discussion about trips there.

Having said all that, there is no doubt that family had an impact on participants' ethnic identity development. Indeed, for some research participants family was so integrated into who they were and how they acted that although they did not explicitly mention "family"; it emerged when they talked about other things such as culture. For example, Bhrugesh described, "Being an Indian is more of a package." Along with culture and religion, he said, it is family that "makes you Indian." If nothing else, parents were "why" research participants "had to go" to ethnoreligious celebrations. Gender expectations, including traditional roles assigned to women in Indian culture (as well as mainstream American culture), also left their imprint on several research participants via family.

For many research participants, parents' experiences were a window on the process of "becoming American" — or refusing to. Reflecting on their growing-up experiences, a number of research participants remarked that they could now see how their parents grappled over issues like preservation of Indian culture while

simultaneously trying to be accepted by mainstream "American" society. For parents, this procses meant choosing what to "give up on"; for the second generation, it was a source of frustration with parents' "foreign" thinking. For research participants, this conflict felt like one between two worlds: home, and beyond home. Socialized by American schools and popular culture, many, like Binu, chafed at the "strict" rules parents laid down,

> like [in the] seventh and eighth grade when my friend would ask me to go out and… I was never allowed to go out…. My mom talks about it to this day, about how much of a hard time I'd give her because I, I would really kind of cause fights and, and that kind of thing, and I would scream and yell and, you know, just could not understand and knew it wasn't fair that I wasn't able to go to the mall, for goodness sakes, until 9:00… Even when I was in high school, I was not really allowed to go out too much. Ninth and tenth grade, the whole homecoming/prom thing, you know... I went to homecoming my eleventh grade year, tenth or eleventh grade, and my parents didn't know that I was going, so I had pulled off a whole homecoming thing, you know, with my friends or what not, but it was those kind of things that was, that was difficult. You know, I definitely had fights with my parents up until college, because college was my freedom years... But before that it was difficult.

Anita faced similar challenges at home, with the added challenge of explaining her parents' rules and actions to her White friends:

> None of my American friends could really understand why… They're like, "Why are your parents putting you through this? You're miserable — do they know you're seeing someone?" It's like, "No, I can't tell them." They don't understand why your parents are giving you such a hard time about this…. I mean, it was just – that was the one thing that no matter how hard you tried to explain, it's like, "We don't get it."

Many scholars have referred to such conflicts as the second generation's attempt to navigate between "two worlds" — the home culture and the dominant culture. These scholars argue that most parents want their children to succeed as Americans, and also maintain close ties with their families and with their respective Indian American

community, and that parents are thus drawn in two different directions; they sometimes have difficulty keeping their desires for their children as Indians and their aspirations for them as Americans in balance (Agarwal, 1991; Gibson, 1988). But to speak simply of "two worlds" is an oversimplification. This conflict between "two worlds" is actually a conflict between the many dimensions of cultural and the conflict is present in multiple dimensions of the worlds such as gender expectations, cultural norms, and parents' coping with new experiences.

For other research participants, parents — with their Indian accents, unfamiliar clothes, and the unfamiliar smells of the Indian home — were an embarrassment as they tried to fit into their classmates' culture and ways. Suhas said,

> I would say that my parents played a negative for me, at first… I think I saw my parents as being different, and I didn't want to be perceived as being different, so I tried to be what they weren't. You know, my parents were very nice to everybody, but very different from everybody, they had a deep accent from anybody else. There's nobody else like them in any of – none of my friends had ever seen, and I wanted to be what they were not.[32]

After college, many research participants felt the desire to build stronger connections with their families, including extended family in India. Ravi talked about family throughout his interview, but it came up most often when he described his life after college. He described his parents and brother as the most important people in his life. Faced with

> ethnic differences between me and the people around me... I guess I am framing myself as someone who is searching... I am finding where I fit. Where I fit is with my family. I am not part of any subculture or anything, like yuppie or stereotypical things. I am with my family, [and] that is my subculture.

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[32] What goes around comes around, however. Suhas continues: "…And now that I look back now, I'm so much like them that it's scary. So I think that they eventually – their teachings and their way of bringing me up, I sort of can say that they've played a positive in my life, but I, I tried not be what they were."

Over the last few years he has also taken greater interest in his extended family in India. He calls them to maintain communication and contact. He talked about how throughout his childhood he received birthday cards from his aunts and now would like to start returning the favor. Anisa also realized that in retaining Indian culture means keeping ties with family "back home." She writes to her grandmother in Telegu, which she taught herself. She goes back on her own in order to spend time with family members in India.

In adulthood, others are focusing on their responsibility to help others in their family deal with experiences like their own. Monali says she feels a strong connection to her cousins who are younger than her and wants to make sure they grow up feeling proud of their Indian heritage.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

In this chapter, I present the data that show the specific role religion plays in the ethnic identity development process for second-generation Indian Americans. (Refer to Chapter 2 for my working definition of *Religion*). The impact of religion is couched in the different ways research participants experience religion — different between participants, and often different across the lifespan of each participant, sometimes active and sometime latent. Each "religious experience" is salient at different life periods for each research participant. The data presented here reveal not only how the type of experience changes over the lifespan for the research participants, but also how the meaning attached to the experience changes. Refer to Figure 4.3 for the religious identification of the research participants. The term "religious experience" refers to all of the research participants' subjective involvement with the sacred. Religious experiences may be individualistic, communicating the experience through beliefs and rituals. Religious experiences may be communal, experienced by or in a group of worshippers whose presence and participation are essential to the experience. The context, content and intensity of the experiences vary in nature and across the lifespan. The experiences have different meanings for different research participants. By "meaning," I am referring to the research participants' interpretation of the situations and events in terms of some broader frame of reference. Meaning links the individual with the larger social group (Berger, 1967). Meaning is not inherent in a situation but is bestowed. An individual's meaning system is learned and develops during the socialization process.

The Charts in Appendix E and Appendix H shows the salience of religion across the lifespan calculated from the card rating data. The reader will note that when respondents were asked to rank various factors' salience in their ethnic identity development in the quantitative, card-reading portion of this study, religion received relatively low rankings: 8th during K-12 and 10th in college, even rising only to 7th during adulthood. While this might at first seem to imply that religion is not in fact a particularly salient factor in the research participants' ethnic identity development, the qualitative data suggests otherwise. Religion is revealed in multiple ways across a range of factors in respondents' lives — including family, community and culture, all factors which are ranked near the top of respondents' card rating data across all three life periods. I will explore some possible reasons for this "contradiction" towards the end of this chapter.

As this chapter reveals, religious identity and religious themes arise repeatedly when respondents are questioned about community, culture, race and the experience of feeling different in school. These frequent multiple manifestations of religion show the importance of qualitative research in the field of ethnic identity development, and for 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans it shows the difficulty of drawing clear lines between concepts like "community" and "culture" and the fact that religious themes may be present even in moments which respondents would not initially characterize as related to religion.[33]

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[33] The fact that respondents rank religion relatively low in the quantitative study more likely reflects the fact that many of them do not feel entitled to rank religion high among the factors; as the qualitative data reveal, many respondents see "religion" in terms of the rituals and practices their parents do — and because they are less likely to engage in such regularized and ritualized religious observance, they feel it would not be legitimate to "give religion a five."

Six Ways Research Participants Experienced Religion

Examining the interviews across the lifespan reveals six ways the research participants experienced religion. Utilizing a predominantly sociological framework, the research participants experience religion through:

- Community
- Culture
- Family
- Belief and Ritual
- Knowledge
- Religion's making the research participants feel different from the people in their schools, colleges and the workplace.

Throughout all the interviews the research participants used the word "religion," some preferred the terms "faith" or "spirituality." Although these three terms have different meanings, in this chapter I have used the words the particular research participant used when talking about his or her experience. Four research participants made it very clear that although they also might consider themselves agnostic, they do identify with a religious label. Of these, two were Sikhs, one a Hindu, and one a "Hindu/Sikh."

Religion for the research participants went from being something they were forced to do either by parents or because of the school they attended to having to the choice to participate or not and do it on their term. Vinay, for example, remarked: "I really did nothing religious in college… because I didn't have my parents trying to get me to Sikh camp or Hindu camp." College and the post-college years have been an opportunity for research participants to reflect on their religious identity, and also a time

of exploring life choices beyond the rules laid down by religion as their parents and/or communities had defined it. It was also a time when individuals began forgetting things about their family/home religion. Anita reported that she "forgot a lot of things only because I wasn't around it as much, more so in terms of names of ceremonies." NUMBER research participants also described this new freedom as a chance figure out what and how much their home religion meant to them.

Religion as Community

Looking at Appendix H, one might prematurely conclude that religion does not have a high salience in the ethnic identity development of second generation Indian Americans. Upon closer examination of the qualitative data included here is that one can see that religion is often seen/experienced through the lens of community. Community is essential in shaping, maintaining and changing the individual's worldview.

Hindu, Muslim, Ismaili, and Sikh research participants grew up in a society which presented to them a competing religious worldview.[34] The socialization into their religious/*ethnoreligious* community involved research participants gaining awareness of the existence and differences of other groups around their own. All the research participants described attending some type of religious ceremony during the K-12 life period. Most reported attending frequently, a finding that was consistent across faiths, including the two research participants who identified as Atheists.[35]

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[34] For reasons relating to the interaction of culture and religion for non-western Christians, the same could at least to some extent be said for the Catholic and Christian children.

[35] In the late 1970s and early 1980s before many Indian American groups had built the temples, mosques, and gurudwaras that are now found in virtually every major American city, religious gatherings took place in people's homes or in local community centers (Eck, Williams, 1992Indian American Hindus began building traditional temples some 20 years ago; major examples include the Sri Venkatesvara temple in

Religion exists and is shaped by a social context and influences that social context. For Indian Americans, then, part of developing a religious identity was developing an identity of the self and the ethnoreligious community as *different,* specifically for non-Christian participants.[36] This phenomenon will recur throughout this chapter. Religion is not only a way of relating the individual to God, but also relating the individual to those around him/her. The community provides the space to express one's religious beliefs.

Throughout respondents' K-12 years, the phenomenon of religious community as a place to come together and "hang out" with young people like themselves was for most even more important than the religious function *per se* . Across interviewees, there is a tendency to speak of religious gatherings and "community" in the same breath, and even interchangeably. When asked about religion, research participants often discussed their "home" Indian American community — and when asked about community, being in the company of co-religionists was a common theme. Many of the experiences one would associate most directly with religion, such as going to mosque or gurudwara, were closely tied in participants' minds to the idea of doing those things with a community and because of a community.

Though membership in an ethnoreligious community over the lifespan, research participants experienced a sense of community at two levels: the individual level, where community for research participants meant having a sense of belonging. Either way, religious participation (generally by parents and at parents' initiative), was a vehicle for

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Penn Hills outside Pittsburgh, and others in several cities across the U.S. like Boston, Atlanta and San Antonio, Texas. (Eck, 1993).

[36] One exception, Binu, a female Catholic – see Chapter 7 for further analysis.

creating that community and; the group level, involving the coming-together of people to celebrate festivals and have group events.

For some research participants, the ethnoreligious community provided a sense of attachment to others who were different from dominant society in the same way they were. The community served as a "refuge" where participants felt they belonged and were accepted. Such community could be a source of strength and comfort in good times and bad. Hussan, an Isamili/Muslim, talked a great deal about the alienation he experienced in high school because there were no others like him in school. He found comfort and acceptance in his community; whenever feeling alienated and alone he "would run to [his] religious community." Sunday schools, discussed at great length below, provided Indian kids of various religious backgrounds with a youth-focused "refuge." Here the research participants felt accepted and culturally and religiously affirmed. Anisa's remark was a typical illustration of the "safe haven" phenomenon:

> I went to Indian cultural school, which turned out to be my biggest outlet. Because I finally had peers who were not my family friends, who I could get to know and talk to. I was so happy. I had something to go to every weekend.

The sense of wanting attachment continued into the collegiate life period. In college, religion-based events provided community for most of the research participants. For many, such events were their first chance to interact with co-religionists from all over the country.

Like others with whom they shared informal social relationships, research participants' roommates left a lasting impression on participants' identity development process. In Smita's case, being around Indian roommates all the time helped her not only become comfortable but also appreciate her culture and religion. Like many respondents,

she had grown up feeling the need to keep certain parts of her identity — like her religion, and other factors that were in her American mindset "strange" or "different" — hidden from her non-Indian peers. When she found herself living among other Indian women, she saw others her own age expressing their Hindu devotion, so she realized it was acceptable and worthwhile for her to do those things also.

But the collegiate community was not always a place of safety or refuge. Many research participants reported that their collegiate exposure to other South Asians — people of different religions, with roots in different parts of India, or with radically different childhood experiences or religious outlooks — was unsettling. Growing up, most were accustomed to relative uniformity within their community: a small number of languages spoken, a commonly-understood manner of acting within communal space, similar socio-economic status. College was the first time most of them encountered people who *looked* like them, but whose approach to being Indian, or to their home religion, was very different.[37]

As adults, several research participants report still feeling uncomfortable in ethnoreligious gatherings. For two — the Atheists — this arises from their discomfort with religious practice as such. For Deepali, who acknowledges being Hindu but identifies primarily as a "western thinker," ethnoreligious gatherings feel contrived.

Religious gatherings were not only a chance to feel individually safe, but also an opportunity for research participants to feel part of a community that was larger than themselves in a way that carried religious significance. Sarvesh is typical of the lion's

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[37] Some research participants reported an analogous experience of internal conflict when they took collegiate religious studies courses focused on Hinduism. Some found that the Hinduism of academic study "doesn't look like my Hinduism" — with the result sometimes being a crisis of confidence in even the limited religious knowledge these young people have when they leave home for school.

share of research participants, who described religion with community as how they built and maintained a connection to Indian culture during their pre-college years. Sarvesh, a Hindu, experienced religion through community gatherings. The group of Indians gathered in his town for religious rituals as well as social functions: "The aunties would cook dinners and have all the other aunties and uncles over for dinner." It is with this same group of people – his community – that would gather for "*puja*s everyone went to and then the whole *satsang,* the whole scriptural reading Sunday mornings." Religious practice thus became not merely an "excuse" for social gatherings but more importantly a vehicle for research participants to feel connected to, integrated within, a community of co-religionists.

Just as research participants experienced culture through community, religion was also experienced through community. Uniformly, research participants — Hindus and non-Hindus alike — conflated Hinduism with Indian culture. During college, attending *Diwali* celebrations was cited as the most frequent way research participants engaged in a "religious" activity (aside from going to temples and *puja*s with parents when home from school). *Diwali*, a celebration of lights, has a basis in Hindu tradition; it commemorates Lord Rama's victory over the demon king Ravana and his ascension as king of India. While many research participants recalled *Diwali puja*s, religious services, as part of the *holiday*, *all* the research participants described *Diwali* as a time when families visited each other's homes and perhaps sharing a meal; the *holiday* has largely turned secular. So it is that on college campuses Indian American students organize a cultural show — featuring, perhaps, traditional song and dance — whose primary function seems to be

giving Indian American college students the chance to dress up in Indian clothes and socialize. Typical of this attitude and approach was Nija:

> We were invited by the community to go to the *puja* and dinner as part of the *Diwali* celebration. It was fun to go there was that sense of community… to interact with Hindus in the community. I wasn't necessarily going for exposure. I wasn't yearning to figure out what the traditions are.

Vinay, who identifies as Sikh and Hindu, said: "And as far as like Indian religious events, then the only ones I went to were the big holidays like, you know, like *Holi* or *Diwali*, they don't necessarily have a religious … component to them." Only Nija and Anya described taking part in religious rituals on *Diwali* while in college. Anya and Nija who in college took part in religious aspects of *Diwali* described it as non –religious experience. Anya said: "I did *aarti* at the *Diwali* show, but I did not think of it as I was participating in a religious event. I might do things that I don't think are religious, cause to me they didn't have much of an [religious] impact." She places her Hindu identity in "a big package of being Indian."

So what was the reason and impact of having *Diwali* celebrations in college? For some it was gathering with the community, experiencing religion at the group level. But is was more than just that. It was a chance to be proud of one's religion and culture on the college campus. Many respondents reported inviting non-South Asian friends. Smita said proudly, "We were everywhere!" For many of them this was "religion"; it had been part of their socialization when they lived with their parents. This points to a third reason for collegiate *Diwali* celebrations: It made the parents proud.

Gathering with a religious community was not "symbolic" religion for all the research participants. For some, the individual aspect of attachment to a community

started fusing with the group aspect. For example, Hussan's community was integral to his religious experience, and when in college he found himself without a religious community he felt a lack of religious connection. In college,

> there was no Ismaili community where I lived. Nearest one was 42 miles away. That was difficult. I would try to do things on my own, but without a community you're dead… Once in awhile someone from Durham would pick me and I would go to the Ismaili home and we do our Ismaili thing there. It was great because they gave us food, [*growing excitement in his voice*] and it was community and there was that bond.

Hussan did not pray alone, because prayer for him had always been something you did in the company of others, in a community. A similar sentiment was expressed by Binu, a Malayali Catholic. As an adult, she feels attending church is very important, but is adamant is about wanting to attend the congregation she grew up with. As a grad student, living far from home, she did not go to church, because although a Catholic church was not far away it was not a Malayali congregation. Whenever she could, she drove home from school and attended Malyali services with her family. Binu's and Hussan's feelings and actions show how important the presence of a community is.

Hinduism fostered a sense of community even for non-Hindu research participants. Because the majority of Indians/Indian Americans in the United States are Hindu, ethnic associations and cultural centers tend to be dominated by Hindus and reflect a Hindu ethos. Just as Hinduism pervades Indian life in India — religion also pervaded and pervades Indian culture in the United States as well. Vinay, a Sikh, discussed the importance of community at the group level – of having people to associate with. For him community over the years has meant having close individual relationships with other Indians. Although not Hindu, Vinay spoke at length about his childhood

memories of going to a Hindu temple and attending religious and cultural functions to have a sense of closeness to people. He said:

> We'd go to the temple, but also, you know, cultural functions, we would always go and, it was more not necessarily the religious aspect of Indian life, because, I said, we're not Hindu, but it was just the culture. You know, all my, all my friends are Hindu, you know, Indian, so I feel like an honorary Hindu, you know, but, but it's just that closeness of staying, you know, with people that you feel very comfortable with.

All of the other non-Hindu research participants described similar feelings during different points in their lives. Seema, a Methodist; Girish, a Jain; and Shiren and Irfan, both Catholic, discussed how through their entire lives they have attended and participated in various Hindu functions. A sentiment expressed by all the research participants is that no matter what religion an Indian American belongs to, for better or worse, Hinduism affects one's ethnic life. Though *Diwali* is a Hindu festival, for example, in America it is a cultural event as well particularly for the second-generation. Indian American Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Muslims participate along with Hindus, because Hindu festivals like *Diwali* are the primary opportunities to come together with other Indian Americans across generations in a celebratory atmosphere.

In the post-college/adult life period, research participants reporting expressing religion through community were fewer in number than in the K-12 and college periods Community remains vitally important, however, as a source for research participants of a sense of connection to their religion. With few exceptions, research participants in their adult life period continued to consider gathering together was a way of expressing religion, and the presence or absence of a Indian or religious community continued to correlate their feelings of religiosity. However, because respondents associate this idea

with the practice and community they were accustomed to as children, virtually the only research participants who actually gather regularly to worship with a religious community are those who have returned as adults to live in the community they grew up in. For those who have moved away from their childhood home, community religious gatherings are something they do only when they "go home" to visit their family. Avinash is typical of this group. He considered himself to be less religious as an adult because he has less contact with his home religious community.

An overall observation is that religion and community for many of the research participants across religious affiliations has a symbiotic relationship; community and religion wax and wane together across the life span. Avya was the only research participant for whom her religious practice, at the ashram, was completely separate from participation in her ethnic community. One can also follow Hussan into adulthood to see that community is religiously important. When I asked Hussan about what religion means to him as an adult, he replied: "I am my community. My community is me." He spoke in the global sense; even in the absence of an actual community, the concept of community remained essential to how he thought of himself as a religious person. Hussan's religious identity is shaped by his self-image as a member of the world Muslim community.

Religion as Culture

Religion is a vehicle for cultural maintenance different during the three different life periods examined in this study through three specific mechanisms: (1) "Sunday Schools," (2) youth camps and (3) going to houses of worship. The third is discussed above. The first two — the programs created by Indian American parents not for their

own use but solely to teach religion and culture to the research participants' generation — are discussed here. Through all three mechanisms, research participants learned more about their cultural and religious heritage and in the process through this process also formed community of co-religionists their own age. As Priti commented "…we went to Sunday school and we would learn about the different stories. I did not understand the rituals and traditions. I went mostly to see my friends."

During college the inextricable link between religion/culture/community continued. As discussed above and in Chapter Four, *Diwali* shows and cultural programs are the primary mechanism for cultural maintenance. During adulthood, there is a decreasing number of research participants how discuss religion and cultural maintenance. Most of the research participants who very strongly linked culture and religion places a greater emphasis on culture than religion.

- **Indian Cultural Schools – "Sunday Schools"**

Nine research participants nostalgically discussed attending "Sunday School." As part of their attempt to pass on the key parts of their national and ethnic identity to their children, Indian immigrants often went beyond in-family teaching to establish regular programs, typically led by an adult in the group, to educate their children. One frequent focus of these Hindu "Sunday schools" was language — usually Hindi (always Hindi, a north Indian bias), unless the school served a specific population in which another language (e.g., Gujarati, Tamil) was heavily represented.[38] Curricula also typically included stories from the *Puranas*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata*, plus information about Gandhi and Indian history. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims talked about

[38] In Burlington, Massachusetts, today, a single Sunday school teaches Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Gujarati, and Marati, because they serve such a large and diverse Indian population.

going to Sunday school to learn about Indian culture, language, and Hinduism, *which for them was linked to "Indian" and Indian national culture.* Anisa described her weekly ritual: "On Sunday mornings, the first hour was language, the second hour was culture. As soon as we walked in we had prayer, we had songs, we would sing the national anthem and all that other stuff." Bipin, a Sikh, had access to a gurudwara in his home town: "Every Sunday at the gurudwara, I learned a lot about like my religion as well as a lot of the culture."

All this constituted the conscious learning that went on at Sunday school. There was also an element of unconscious learning, which could include picking up bits of the language being used among the few adults in the room, and internalizing cultural values such as the importance of family and of respect for one's elders. Anisa reported experiencing a lot of this unconscious learning, the way people acted, spoke, encouraged her to speak her language, etc that went on the Sunday schools that helped Anisa: "It empowered you so you could feel more comfortable."

"Sunday school" — a term obviously picked up from America's dominant Christian lexicon — could take place on Sunday, on Saturday, or even on Friday night. When a community center was not available, it would be held at one family's house. Before their communities were large enough to support religious "Sunday school" of their own, Indian American Sikhs and Muslims would often attend. Ironically, it was often the one cultural event that Indian Christian young people could not attend; several Catholic research participants who went to the "White" Catholic Sunday school faced a schedule conflict. They wanted to go to the Hindu Sunday school because all their

friends were going; but their parents decided their religious obligations dictated otherwise.

In school, Anisa had peers who were simply her friends just because their parents were friends with hers, yet it was when she got to spend time with people her own age of a similar cultural background that she was happiest:

> So they taught us a lot. It was predominantly north Indian, so some of the stuff I could not relate. Given what I had, why not! I started going when I was 15. I have learned a great deal, so much that I still know today. It was very, very valuable.

Anisa's experience is also typical of Indian Americans whose families hail from the southern part of the subcontinent. As the child of Telegu speakers, Anisa did not have much use at home for the Hindi she learned at Sunday school. Because many Hindu gods are referred to by different names in the south than in the north, she also learned stories that sounded different from those her parents told her.[39] Still, her reminiscences show the emotional and social value of Sunday school.

Although research participants who took part in Sunday school uniformly reported looking forward to the weekly event, most "kept it separate" from their week-long school life. Suhas was typical in this respect: "tried to keep it separate from everything else. We went every Sunday to read from the *Gita* and the *Ramayana* every Sunday with the other Indians in the community." Suhas saw his "Indian" life (on weekends and at home) as distinct from his "American" life (in school with White friends). Suhas was not the only research participant made the conscious decision to keep Indian and the American parts of their lives separate.

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[39] For several south Indian respondents, in fact, there is sense of distinctiveness within the sense of commonality, which further complicates the findings and analysis.

Not everyone was enthusiastic about Sunday school classes. Even upon reflection, Bipin and others discussed going to Sunday schools as mandatory in their household. "It was something that was definitely more like my parents telling me that I had to go." He went on to say that he did walk away with knowing various things like language, religious teachings and history.

The positive social effects of Sunday school could be powerful and lasting. For example, Anita said the friends and the community she built through her Sunday school classes are still a big part of her life.

> Probably my closest friends and still, as to this day, was my group – our group from Sunday School. Every Sunday, temple stuff. Um, we're still very tight right now. So, the entire time they've been a real big influence on my life.

- **Religious Youth Camps**

An extended version of "Sunday School" were religious youth camps, which also provided social outlet and a place where they recited prayers, learned how to perform certain rituals, and heard folklore stories. Religious youth camps were by their nature more intense than Sunday school. They typically lasted one or two weeks during the summer and included typical summer camp activities like swimming and campfires. For many young Indian Americans, it was the only time before college when they could be surround by kids of similar age and cultural/religious background. Five research participants reported attending camps and typically did so annually for six to 10 years, as Anita did "up until the time I was a counselor. That whole experience and the Sunday School experience, those people, had a lot to do with it, my Indian identity."

Hussan found great comfort in being around others who also longed to be with people who understood experiences of alienation and isolation: "When I would go to Ismaili youth camps in California, New York, [and] Ontario… You sense that yearning for that community and yearning for someone, someone that understand."

Most of the camps the research participants reported attending were in or near their hometowns, and often were sponsored by their local Indian American association. Although they were sleepaway camps, not day camps, they drew from a small geographic region often served by a single temple that served. Anita, for example, grew up in western Pennsylvania and attended a camp sponsored by Pittsburgh's Venkateshwara Mandir — the same temple where she and her parents worshipped year-round. Others, like the Ismaili camp Hussan attended, drew young people from across North America and were organized by national ethnic or religious associations.

Religion as Knowledge

Like all other adolescents starting college, several of the research participants in this study began to think about their lives in the context of their religious background that has continued into their adult years today. Many 1.5 and second generation Indian Americans who are Hindu, Sikh or Muslim often had limited resources for learning about their religion. Most research participants were exposed to localized traditions (exceptions two Catholics and one Methodist), present at family and community group events. Most reported understanding very little about worship and information on specific rituals. For example, Sina, a Hindu, described growing up in a home where religion was practiced devoutly — through daily *puja*s and prayers before each meal — but where the religion was rarely explained to them. Sina described her father as a very religious man.

Despite frequent trips to the local temple, "whenever someone in [her] family had a birthday" and her father's extensive involvement with teaching the "Sunday school" classes, Sina reported that she "never really knew what Hindu meant as a religion."

Upon entering college, and some before, started questioning what their religion really meant to them. Hindu, Ismaili, Jain, Muslim and Sikh research participants are trying to understand and construct their religious identities in the context of a society that is not only dominated by Christianity but also renders Hinduism and Sikhism invisible and "terrorizes" the Islamic faith.

Some of the research participants in college wanted "to know more" about the religion they'd been raised with. Some wanted to go beyond knowing that *Diwali*is a *holiday* could take a course that answered the question, "*Why* is *Diwali*is a *holiday*?" In college some wanted to explore Vedic philosophy, or find the "real rules" behind the moral tenets they had absorbed from their parents. Not all felt that what they'd learned before college was not enough, but 12 (over 25%) research participants explicitly discussed wanting to know *more.*

My study reveals two main reasons for wanting to learn more about religion. First, many wanted a better understanding of the rituals and traditions which could then provide for a stronger philosophical grounding. Others decided they wanted to learn more when an interaction with others revealed how much they did not know about their own faith tradition.

Six research participants who sought more information on their family religion (or other religions) enrolled in academic courses. Another four (approximately 10%)

participants studied independently and became self-taught by reading books and attending lectures by religious authorities.

Those that took courses reported that they wanted not merely to understand their own faith as such but also to understand themselves and their religion as it existed in the context of dominated Christian society. Research participants who did know very much as well as those who considered themselves to be knowledgeable about their own religious heritage and traditions enrolled in courses. Four of the six research participants who took courses identified themselves as "religious," "practicing," or as a "person of faith." They reported wanting to learn more to have a stronger philosophical grounding for practicing the rituals and reciting the prayers. The other two did not yet identify with a religion.

Others, like Bindu, a Hindu, took it upon themselves to learn about Hinduism outside the classroom. Bindu said the catalyst for her decision to study Hinduism informally was her embarrassment upon meeting non-South Asian people in college and afterwards who knew more about Hinduism than she did. She was familiar with some of the key tenets of Christianity, having attending a private school, but found that "my friends… wanted to know more about this [Hindu] religion that I don't *even* know. I thought wow, they know enough to ask me this stuff…And then I started to learn."

The fruits of these students' labor included feeling more spiritual, having a "philosophical grounding," and sensing a deeper connection to God and connection to family. For example, Ravi talked about his relationship with his father growing in college because of their frequent discussion on various religious topics. In college, Ravi read books by Radhakrishnan and other theology texts dealing with Hinduism and

his discovery of Hinduism's foundations opened a new avenue of communication with his father.

Two research participants majored in religion. Avya majored in religion, with a concentration in Hinduism as an undergraduate and Hussan is pursuing a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies. Avya described herself as "very spiritual from a young age." Focusing on Hinduism in her academic coursework became another way to recognize her religious and cultural background. Avya's cultural and religious socialization occurred in this ashram community, in upstate New York, rather than in a cultural and religious community in her home area as was typical of other research participants. The ashram community included people of various races and ethnicities and was focused on meditation and chanting; it was "not an Indian cultural experience," so Avya's childhood experience with Hinduism included none of the cultural/community activities that most other research participants reported. Involvement in her college's South Asian Student Association was her first exposure to Indian American "cultural Hinduism." Avya reported that majoring in Hinduism enabled to see herself as "finally feeling authoritative on something."

Avya's ashram religious experience was in many ways dissimilar from traditional Hindu practice of temple attendance and *puja*. It was not until her seven-month trip to India, a requirement of her academic major, that Avya became more interested in rituals and going to temples. This time was also a loss of innocence for Avya: while in India, she researched the interaction of contemporary Hinduism in India and BJP (conservative Hindu) politics and discovered that a religion she had idealized as "peaceful" and "tolerant" was in India being used as a tool for political gain and discrimination against

religious minorities including Muslims and Christians. Her major frustration with her academic study, however, involved the fact that most scholars of Hinduism and Indian culture were not Indian or Hindu but White: "By the end of college that is why I quit religion was because I could not do that for a lifetime. I could not always be judging myself on these objective standards created by non-Indians or non Hindus."

Religion "as" knowledge acquisition continues to be a major way in which the research participants today, during the adult life period, remain involved with religion. Some research participants, like Nija, were exposed to the "basics" of Hinduism during childhood and now wants to develop a deeper understanding of the traditions she grew up with — to get a "basic organized groundwork in my head." Others are analytical of their knowledge and say they have only been exposed to a certain kind of Hinduism or Ismailism. Mina, who today identifies as an Atheist, reported that she wants to believe in God and that she wants to do so within the Hindu tradition. She grew up, like Nija, exposed to certain basic tenets and rituals of Hinduism — but, unable to find God in them, she is now looking *beyond* her childhood religious exposure to different perspectives and different ways of approaching Hindu thought and ritual. Anand, who also identifies as an Atheist, reports religion playing a central theme in his life as well; he is trying to figure out just what Hindu faith means to decide whether and in what he could believe.

For others, the inclination to learn more arises not out of curiosity less religious than cultural. Sweta said, "I want to know more about Hinduism because if I feel that is the underlying fabric for a lot of my culture." As discussed in greater detail below, most are interested about learning more about their respective faiths so they have a better

understanding and do a more effective job transmitting religion to their children. Others described a desire like Ashish's; he wants to learn more because he knows how much Hinduism shaped his parents and grandparents' life and he wants to understand better their experiences and beliefs.

Religion as Belief and Spirituality

Most research participants did not talk about religion in terms of a belief in God or spirituality during the K-12 years. Avya was the one exception. She was "spiritually connected to [her] guru at [her] ashram" from a very young age. As research participants entered college, like other college students, they began to ponder what it meant to believe in God and to participate in an organized religion. This thinking had an recursive relationship with knowledge and participation. The "essence of religion" or non-observable qualities emerge during college and beyond. Irfan, for example, remarked:

> You know, grade school, high school, we had church every week, we had religious class every week, you know. Definitely more religious, but spiritual, I think it kind of shifted in – in college I found myself praying more on my own.

When asked about religion, at least fifteen research participants spoke in deep, esoteric terms that — particularly because some of them spoke of their belief system as a contrast to religion — might be better called *spirituality* . Four to Six research participants research participants claimed deep spiritual beliefs but denied being "religious" because that term — as it described modes of practice that are merely historical and often socially divisive, exclusive, and sectarian. Their "religious"/"spiritual" identity focused on adherence to eternal truth requires a very generalized *(philosophical?)* sort of faith that transcends these forms of religion. The

research participants felt they are being neither inconsistent nor untruthful when they state that although they are not religious they do engage in individual worship.

For Sweta, college was a chance to discover a sense of religious devotion that she had not developed earlier. During her early years of college, Sweta felt there was something missing from her life but wasn't sure what it was. With the help of a friend, she ultimately found a sense of comfort and belonging through prayers and rituals and it continues for her today. "Practicing Hindu? No," she answered immediately,

> I knew I was Hindu, I knew there certain things we do. They did not have much significance for me. I have this one friend who is very religious. It was really strange having someone my age be so religious. Her family was very religious. She would get up every morning and pray. After watching her my junior year, I realized that I was missing something and I really respected her as a person and thought her religion had a lot to do with the type of person she was. And so from that point on, she kind of influenced me to pay more attention to my religion. I don't pray everyday but I talk to God often. (Laughs a little). A little bargaining session with God! I do feel a sense of inner peace. I feel good.

For those who identified with a religion, spirituality was about a belief in a supreme power without much constraints and guidelines through specific practices and rituals, meditations reciting prayers and fasting on certain holidays. It should be noted that ideas about spirituality and God for the most part was an "internal" feeling, a private connection they felt to something larger or holy. In the case of a few, it came about through conversations and living with others who practiced.

During college and adulthood years, research participants found a spiritual connection or a "connection to God," in the words of Shiren, by (1) reading scripture; (2) performing ritual; or (3) listening to or reciting prayers, either individually or with one's respective community.

Shiren found comfort and a sense of connection to God in the Scripture readings in church. Smita performed *aarti*, a light offering to Hindu gods and goddesses, with a friend every week, in that friend's dormitory suite. Smita's experience — creating time and space for traditional religious expression — was rare among research participants. Smita described it as modeling her parents' traditions. Though not always knowing why she did this act, she found comfort and peace in actually performing the ritual: "I definitely became more religious, and now I think I am more religious than my parents are."[40] Shabnam had picture of her ancestral temple in India, given to her by her father. This picture carried with it a tremendous amount of significance and she always displayed it in her dorm room and her current apartment. She said, "I tried to do daily prayers – and I tried to keep it somewhere in my head." Some performed devotions on a regular basis and others it was more infrequent or not at all. Typical of the "infrequent" group, Anita fasted on certain holidays and prayed before taking an exam:

> I think still even if, you know, you'd always do a little prayer before you start a test or when you – certain things like, you know, you don't put your feet on books or anything like that. I was very, I'm very picky about that.

Participants varied in their definitions of what it means to "practice" and what it means to "be religious" in college and adulthood, and for many this tendency of religious identity and "religiosity" to rise and fall over the course of a lifetime continues. Such changes in perspective and in the meaning research participants ascribe to religion and religious practice often occur in response to major life events or changes. I call these events "catalysts," and discuss them in greater detail below. Religious practice is

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[40] Though Smita discussed "not knowing why she was doing the ritual, which could be labeled "symbolic religion" (Gans, 1977), that might be an oversimplification of the issue.

situational; it may mean one thing during high school and something very different in adulthood — and it may do so without being inconsistent or diminishing the depth of meaning respondents feel toward their religious practices and identities.

For some respondents, praying was one of the least-understood and most easily left-behind aspects of their childhood religious experience. Particularly because of the language barrier discussed above, many research participants characterized prayer and chanting as merely "ritualistic" and something that was not a part of their college life. For others, prayer continued to have meaning greater than the meaning of the ritual *qua* ritual; for them, the relationship between the symbolism and meaning of the ritual and the devotion they wished to express was important. In Nija's words,

> I have strong faith, I don't get so caught up in the ritualistic details. I like to practice. I think you can say you practice in a lot of different ways. Like when you go to a formal setting like a temple, you can pray. I also pray at home because I think that God is everywhere. I don't think I consciously pray everyday.

For some, belief and spirituality was separate from the community experience. Avya, whose spiritual community at the ashram is something different from cultural community. Part of the power of religion for Avya is that she experiences it *with* community — her idea, discussed below, that sharing *satsang* with others is more powerful than experiencing it alone — but her religious community is separate and distinct from her cultural community. For most research participants, the line between culture, religion and community remains indistinct — and cultural/community events can still, in the adult life period, create the feeling of religious maintenance.

The two Atheists, Mina and Anand, have thought and read a great deal about religion. The existence of God continues to be something they think about, and while

they still deny it it is not something they "shut out" without thought or reflection. It is interesting that Mina very much wants to identify with Hinduism and to believe in God as Hinduism characterizes God. She feels it's important that she believe in the religion that will — by virtue of her and her husband's participation in an ethnoreligious community with his parents — be passed on to her children. Mina says she needs "to believe in God first," and that once she believes in a God she wants to experience and practice that belief via Hinduism; doing so, she believes, will help her reconcile the conflict within herself and accept her children's socialization in a Hindu community.

Religion as a Moral Compass

For many research participants, religion at some time in their lives began serving as a "moral compass." By this I mean religious beliefs served as a guide to doing "right" and eschewing "wrong" – or, at least, a sense of the difference between the two. Research participants reported feeling as if they are doing something "wrong" morally, that wrongness is thought of in religion terms. Many, whose primary source of pre-collegiate religious exposure was their parents, reported feeling a *religious* pang of failure when doing something that, in Suhas' words, "veered away" from their family religion.

College is a stage of life when most young people are pushing the boundaries of childhood rules — and even of societal rules — as part of figuring out what they believe and who they are. As already noted, college for these forty-one Indian Americans was a time in when their association with religion was voluntary. Religion had already been infused into their lives; the formal and informal teachings they got growing up stayed

with them. So it was based on "their religion" that they saw how certain actions or inactions as "straying" from the religion.

Different beliefs, behavior and ideas that pointed the moral compass in the "*right direction"* and the *"wrong direction"* for the research participants. The "right direction" was identified as doing whatever it was to be religious. For example, for Bhrugesh "being religious meant respecting your parents." For Avya, her religious beliefs were paramount; she said being a Hindu

> meant being disciplined [and] not eating meat. It still means constantly trying to put Hindu teachings into practice...not losing my temper. Chanting and keeping up with things like holidays…. Going to ashram…. Always trying to practice seeing God in everyone.

For Bipin, a Sikh, "practicing started to mean going to Gurudwara every Sunday, but more than that, [it was about] applying it to my everyday life and how the beliefs reflected my everyday life."

Among both male and female experiences, the most common belief, behavior or idea that pointed the moral compass in the *"wrong direction"* was drinking alcohol: While Hinduism does not specifically forbid it as Islam does, many "observant" Hindus don't drink. If as a Hindu you do drink, others may question your religiosity; thus many research participants whose parents do not drink alcohol reported a sense of moral, "religious" failing when they drank. Bipin continues that statement and says that practicing Sikhism for himself also meant having "the constant reminder that I shouldn't be drinking." Drinking alcohol and engaging in premarital sex, across religious identifications, were interpreted as not being religious or as having lost some religious grounding was through drinking alcohol.

For some noticing the straying was fine, and for others it brought on a sense of internal conflict. Shiren decided that due to "drinking and partying, that I basically realized that I did need spiritual guidance." As some research participants experienced moments of moral doubt or "failure" in college, they sought spiritual guidance. Shiren talked about sitting in church and contemplating God and the role of God in her life:

> I would go to church by myself sit down when there was no one around, and just start praying, and basically asking God to help me figure out what I really believe and why am I having all these questions, why am I having all these doubts in my mind when for so long, you know, everything just made sense.

Ultimately, Shiren reported, she became a "churgh-goer" again. "Whenever I feel like I'm getting off track, whenever I feel like I need some sort of guidance, I always start praying again. I go to church again."

Some respondents did "follow the rules." Ravi reported he did not drink alcohol in college. Nija also made a conscious moral choice not to drink alcohol and not to have premarital sex. Ravi and Nija did not report feeling isolated for their beliefs; they specifically mentioned that it did not cause them to feel different from being a "typical American college student." The issues of premarital sex and alcohol continued into adulthood.

Religion Through Family

Most religious functions, regardless of religious background were attended with a family. For many research participants, family continued to be their primary link to religion even during their college years when they were living away from home. Most research participants described "doing something religious" as an inevitable part of going home for a weekend or a school *holiday*. The tenor of respondents' descriptions of the

experience changed, however. No longer was religion something they were forced to do, temple a place they were "dragged" to against their wills. For most who reported religious observance while home from college, going to temple, gurudwara or church was a chance to spend time with parents. Vinay did describe his home-time observance as similar to that which was part of his pre-college life: "[During school breaks] We always would go together and both my mom and dad attend Gurudwara – it really just – neither way as far as faith. It was the same as it was in high school."

Family-focused religious participation was also important for research participants who traveled to India while in college. Only 19 of 41 research participants traveled to India during college, but for those who did the trip was an important re-exposure to the home religion and culture, often including the chance to go to mosque, *gurudwara* or *mandir* with grandparents and other relatives. For those in college — perhaps because of the soul-searching that is indigenous to the college years — trips to India were a chance for self-discovery. If K-12 trips to India were more about going and seeing family, then trips to India during college became more about seeking answer to introspective questions like, "What is my attachment to this land? Do I even have one? What does it really mean for me to be from this country or my parents to be from this country?" The size and visibility in India of religious communities — Hindu, Jain, Muslim, Ismaili and Malyali Catholic — that are tiny and invisible in this country was an important part of that process.

Discussions about religion also provided a way that research participants bonded with their parents in college. Ravi — perhaps the only exception to the "only-at-home" phenomenon noted in the previous paragraph — said that talks with his father about the

Ramayana and other mythological stories were very important to him during his college years. He could take a Hindu religious issue he heard about at school, whether in a lecture or a conversation with a friend, and talk about it with his father:

> The funny thing is that I discovered how much I new. It was kind of amazing how much I new. Because I would read those kids' comic books, I had all the different stories. And I just read them as stories. But I remembered them all, and they started to fit together. Like I knew which ones were at the time of Ram and which ones were at the time of Krishna.

These discussions were critical to his ethnic identity development process and happened throughout his four years of college. In part, this is true *because Ravi is American as well as Indian*: an important difference between Indians and second-generation Indian Americans – Indians from India *just believe it,* while Indians in America want to know why to believe it.

Feeling Different Because of Religion

As some non-Christian participants came to understand the essence of God and faith as their religious traditions defined those concepts, they felt religiously different and invisible in the larger society. Growing up in America, it was impossible for them not to know what "American people" believe: They believe in Jesus, a Jesus who looks like a White-skinned human being. Christian rituals were familiar: They pray while sitting or kneeling with their fingers intertwined under their chins. Their religious symbols are the cross or Crucifix and the Bible. The research participants saw their parents pray in a different way: bowing, palms pressed together, or waving an *aarti* lantern before the Hindu shrine in the house; eating fruit and nuts that had been offered first to a small, many-armed statute; kneeling, arms outstretched, on an east-facing prayer rug and

incanting the names of Allah. They knew their ways didn't match — and by extension, that they somehow did not fit in the U.S.

The result was a range of experiences that made them feel alienated and isolated from their peers and classmates, from their neighbors, or from dominant society generally. Bhrugesh was told his gods were funny. Suhas was teased in school for not eating beef. When she was made to stand in the hallway during prayer time, Vishali's got an early and stark lesson — from a teacher, no less — that religiously she did not belong:

> I remember in second grade … they recited the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of class. And I remember that I was the only non-Christian person who knew the prayer. Another week into the program, the teacher announced that if there was anyone who did not want [to] say it they were welcomed to go outside. They did not have to be a part of it. So I remember feeling strange. I remember saying that I would like to go outside. I remember going outside and being with two kids who were Jewish, one kid who was a Roman Catholic and another Indian kid. We were put out in the hall and we were all alone. That should not have happened. There was no reason that we should have been sent out. I remember asking people why are we out here and we were the smart ones and I thought we were here to learn and we should have been the ones in there. That was my first awareness to there is not something right in society right now.

Belonging to a non Judeo-Christian faith made respondents feel different. These feelings of difference arose due to the research participants' socialization in the U.S. where Christian hegemony prevails. Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Ismaili research participants reported feeling different from the dominant society because of different religious beliefs and practices. For example, two research participants mentioned feeling "awkward," because everyone discussed in school how they celebrated holidays like Christmas and Easter. For Priti, in-class religious celebrations marked her as different from her classmates:

> [In] grade school we would celebrate Christian holidays, [and] definitely feeling that I was not a part of that celebration. I mean every holiday – Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The curriculum at that point was very secular Christian.

Individuals felt the difference from the media and from everyday schoolmates and peers. For example, Farzad talked about numerous times he really wanted to "hide from the world" because of the constant negative depictions of Islam. "I was very aware of the fact that I was Muslim, and back in, you know, '79 and '80, that was a very unpopular religion to be with a lot of what happened with the Iran hostages and all."

Research participants took notice of their religious identity in different social contexts, particularly when they felt different from the dominant White Christian society because they were not Christian. Not all religion-focused experiences reported by research participants were prejudicial or discriminatory, but nonetheless Hindu, Ismaili, Jain and Sikh research participants reported feeling different because they did not attend church, prayed to different God(s) and prayed in a different manner. For example, Bhrugesh talked at length about the way kids in school and others would treat him differently because he was not of the same religion as everyone else in school: "Some of the kids wanted to learn and for some since it wasn't their religion or their background and so they thought it was stupid." He recalled several classmates asking him, in a hurtful manner, why his God (*Ganesha*) had an elephant's head, or why his goddess has eight arms. Likewise, Suhas reported feeling different due to "the fact that we don't believe in Christ and that kind of thing, and that made me stand out."

Even absent direct, confrontational remarks like those, the Christian social phenomenon of church — which, according to the Christian Coalition, 100 million

Americans attend every Sunday[41] — and its absence from the lives of research participants made them conscious of being different: "Not going to church was something. People talked about going to church and I did not go to church." It's difficult for Christians to understand how pervasive images of the church and Christian conceptions of religion are in American society. For some research participants, simply not going to church, to "Mass," or to "Sunday services," made them feel different because those experiences would come up in conversation with classmates or would be part of a classroom colloquy with the teacher. For others, it was the fact that everything religious was expressed using Christian terminology that marked them as different. Many described being asked questions like, "What is your Bible?" and "What is your Christmas?"

Three of the Catholic research participants did not express feeling any religious difference from White Christians, but two recalled feeling more comfortable among fellow Indians than among White Christians. One is Binu, the Malayali Catholic discussed above, who did not go to church during graduate school because the nearby Catholic churches did not serve Malayali congregations. Irfan and Shiren both attended predominantly-White Catholic churches during their K-12 life stage, and Irfan said he felt more different in his Catholic school — as the only Indian in "a sea of Catholics" — than he did when participating in Indian community functions as the only Catholic in "a sea of Indians." One of the research participants who identifies as Methodist, Sima, said that she did not always feel comfortable around White Christians. These experiences show the intriguing and sometimes-contradictory intersection of race and religion. After coming to the United States at age seven, Sima went to church with her family in a White Methodist

[41] Ralph Reed, interview by Tim Russert on *Meet the Press*, 1996.

congregation. When she was in high school, a Hindu temple was built in her city, she began hanging out there with her Indian friends while continuing to attend church on Sundays. In adulthood, Sima states very clearly that she often feels less comfortable in the company of White Methodists than in the company of non-Christian Indians.

Analysis

While there are a number of themes I would enjoy expanding upon, in the interest of space I will focus on a few key, overarching themes. First, I will discuss *catalytic* events in the lives of research participants that led to them to think more about religion and to reflect on their religious identities. Second, I present an analysis, comparing two research participants whose thoughts show how religious beliefs and practices are understood and interpreted in multiple ways. Third, I discuss the notion of religiosity and what that meant for the research participants. I end with concluding thoughts.

Catalysts for Religious Thought

I identified three types of catalysts that resulted in the research participants' actively thinking about religion and its role in their lives. These catalysts were: (1) cognitive dissonance between a research participant and his/her parents on the subject of religion, (2) trips to India, and (3) getting married, preparing to marry, or actively seeking a life partner. In interview after interview, these were the critical incidents that made research participants "stop and think" about religion. Experiences of cognitive dissonance often happened late in high school or in college — a stage of adolescent development when individuals often began asking, "What is God?" and, "What do God and my religion mean to me?". Suhas, for example, attended a Hindu Sunday school and in his mid-teens

decided he didn't want to continue attending Sunday school because he did not "buy into" what his parents and the Sunday school were teaching him about Hinduism. This experience of cognitive dissonance caused Suhas to pause and consider his own religious thoughts and feelings and to seek our alternative sources of information about religion.

Ravi's experience of cognitive dissonance occurred while he was in college. Ravi — a Hindu whose family came from the Bengal region in eastern India — had built a close relationship with his parents over the phone, talking frequently with his father about religious topics. He considered his parents to be very "liberal" on issues of interreligious relationships because in high school he had dated White girls and could bring them home.[42] Yet when he called his parents during his sophomore year and told him about having made a new friend, a Bengali Muslim girl, they started "spouting anti-Muslim rhetoric."

> I just told them one time that I met this Muslim girl and she was actually Bangladeshi, her father was an assimilationist, but she was getting more interested in her own culture, not Islam, but Bengali culture. For example, she wanted to speak Bengali. I was all excited cause I was learning Bengali.... So I told my parents about her and said, 'Hey, there is this girl and she is Bangladeshi.' They said 'Is she Muslim?' I said, 'yeah.' They said, my dad said, 'have nothing to do with her, or at least don't start anything with her.' And that really shocked me. That was a shocking event. Just because it had not been....maybe that does do something to my identity, because I realize how deep rooted the differences are. My parents were very liberal. They let me go out to California from New York... whenever I would date White girls, they loved meeting them... So I thought they were very liberal people.

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[42] Ravi considered his parents "liberal" because they him date a White person. I think that's not liberal, just the notion —- bought into by many immigrants from India — that in this country everything White is just fine. It may also be that for Ravi's parents, the nativist ideas that in India might have been expressed as opposition to those who were not Hindu (including Christians) became focused solely on Muslims as the unacceptable "other."

His parents' nativist remarks came as a shock to Ravi. For him, this experience showed how deeply rooted are the differences between Hindus and Muslims from the subcontinent; at the same time, his friendship with his Bengali Muslim classmate also made him feel the Hindu-Muslim conflict to have been "created" with religion as merely an excuse.

> It confused me and I confronted them with it. I told them, 'Pa, how can you be like that.' My mom has this really…she thinks they [Muslims] are extremist. I would argue with this and we never got to any resolution. She thinks that Americans here can tell the difference between a Muslim Indian and a Hindu Indian and label one as the extremist and the other was as not. I was just adamant, I was like, "Ma, look at your skin. They don't really care about that, they don't know about all the [religious] differences." … I became very anti-*sardarji* jokes,[43] 'cause I had friends that were Sikhs. And I confront my parents about that. I confronted them about the whole Muslim thing.

Although he could rationalize his parents' feelings as rooted in the Hindu-Muslim conflict they had grown up with, which is heavy with political and historical as well as religious differences, he experienced this conflict with his parents in religious terms and it became part of how he defined his religious beliefs as distinct from his parents'.

The religious facet of trips to India was also strong during the collegiate and post-college years –– more so than during the K-12 years, when research participants spoke of trips to India mostly in terms of its effect on their cultural identity and connection to family. Research participants who went to India during college, and even more so those who went in adulthood, described experiences of "re-connecting" to their religion by going to temples and experiencing "spirituality" in the company of other Indians. Other research participants described experiences in India as less enjoyable experiences that led

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[43] The word *sardarji* refers to Sikhs.

them to reach strong conclusions about religion and religiosity. Hussan, for example, took a trip to Bombay just after finishing college — a trip which he said confirmed for him that religion is stronger than culture.

> Over the summer I went to Bombay, Mumbai, as a part of college educators, who educated high school and college, English-speaking, mostly private schools, about AIDS and HIV… That was really eye opening. I was with all these South Asian Americans who were trying to figure out, "Who the hell am I as a South Asian, American, Indian?"… That was quite remarkable. I realized cultural bonds are far inferior to religious bonds.

While this remark raises the issue that as a Muslim, Hussan is a minority in India as well as in America, the point remains that research participants' trips to India – regardless of the individual participant's religion – had a strong impact on the thinking and actions of some from a religious perspective.

Thus, whether involving encouraging or discouraging religions experiences, visiting India had an impact that got research participants to think about religious issues and shaped the ethnic identity development process in second generation Indian Americans.

The process of preparing to marry, or of seeking a life partner, was the third critical incident that led many research participants to think about religion. Most reported thinking about how are they would transmit religious identity and belief to their children, with some wondering whether they would know enough about their own religion to teach it to their children as their parents had taught it to them. This was true even for respondents who did not consider "ritual" to be an important part of their own religious identity. Vishali is one of these; although she feels religious and does not put a lot of importance on ritual practice, when she goes to her aunt's house and aunt does *puja* and

aarti towards her, Vishali "really feel[s] something." She is concerned that she will be unable to pass along the *ritual* aspects of her tradition. She said "I don't put as much into ritual as I do behavior. Still I can't help thinking I am losing something."[44]

For Hussan, seeking a life partner who was also Muslim was important not only for transmitting Islamic beliefs to his children but also for maintaining his own faith. Of those seven research participants who were already married, five said marrying a co-religionist was important to them for two reasons: maintaining their own religion and transmitting it to their children. Many of those who are not yet married but are seeking a life partner — no longer merely "dating" — also expressed a preference to marry within their own religious tradition.

All personal meaning systems gain effectiveness by their link some community in which they are shared. For many of the research participants, theology has been affected by socialization in a hegemonic Christian culture and their reality has been framed by religious syncretism. This is particularly true for those of "Indian religions";[45] notably, the two research participants who attended predominately-White churches did not say this sensation had been part of their life experience. While the research participants accepted some of the religious meanings conveyed throughout their socialization, their meaning system today is has been influenced by exposure to other religions and

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[44] Like research participants' reluctance to rank religion high among salient factors in the card-rating portion of the study, feelings like Vishali's result from the research participants' continuing to think about religiosity in terms of what they observed their parents doing, such as daily *puja*s, Sanskrit prayer and vegetarianism for Hindus; unshorn hair for Sikh men; Friday worship and a refusal to drink alcohol for Muslims; and so forth. There is the impression that what parents did was somehow "real" religion; losing even the most ritualistic aspects of it mean feeling a sense of loss and — particularly when faced with a catalyst experience — feeling concern over whether and how respondents will pass the religious tradition along to their own children.

[45] This term is meant to include Hindus, Ismailis, Muslims and Sikhs and exclude Catholics and Christians, whose minority status in the United States is largely (but not entirely) without a religious component.

interactions with friends and family, as well as by the dominant White Christian society. Some have not redefined the religion for themselves. For example, some of the Hindu and Muslim research participants grew up being shown the various ways one can practice the religion. One of the forms of practicing both faiths is through service, *seva*.

> What I love about the Muslim community here at Harvard is that it is a strong community. {people will call him on things} I use to be down on my Ismaili past. For me it is about being a practicing Muslim, and that is what Islam is. It is about practice. Like the five Pillars which I only realized this year, even though I was a five-pillar Muslim. Only one pillar is belief; the rest of them are practices: prayer, zakah, hajj, and fasting.

For Hussan, "practicing Islam" is of utmost concern *Seva* is one of the ways of being religious – of being a Muslim.

Two Conceptions of "Practicing" Religion

Religious beliefs and practices are understood and interpreted in multiple ways, as demonstrated by the range of terminology (*religion, faith, spirituality*) and interpretations of concepts like religiosity expressed by research participants. An experience identified as religious by one research participants is at times not identified as religious by another research participant because of the meanings and associations that is attached to the experience. For example, the Hindu respondents interpret and understand Hinduism in a myriad of ways. Nija — whose experience and thoughts are actually typical of a large proportion of the Hindu respondents — grew up attending "Sunday School" and associating with her ethnoreligious community. She identifies as a practicing Hindu today and explains that she identifies as such because "I think it [Hinduism] is a very flexible religion. I like that it is very accepting of other religions." Having been presented with the Hinduism of her parents and community and not seeking out any other

sources of information results in a specific definition/understanding of the religion, albeit a limited and biased one. Living in the U.S and practicing "American Hinduism," although she does not see it this way, allows many research participants like Nija to experience a physical and emotional distance from Hinduism. Nija's Hinduism maybe open and accepting to all religions, but is everyone else's? Looking at the situation in India in the past few years of virulent attacks on Christians is evidence enough that Hinduism is many things to many people.

Anila, like Nija, also grew up with and Indian American community. She said, "I would not say I am a practicing Hindu. I would say it is more like I go to temple with my parents and I would fully participate with my parents. It is only something I do with them." In contrast to Nija, Anila does not *perceive* going to the temple as a form of practice. Instead, for her, it is an experience she shares with her parents and that — not any personal spiritual resonance that she seems to associate with "practicing" — makes it special for her. In recent times, particularly since the highly-publicized religious violence against Christians in India in 1998 and 1999, she says:

> I feel less like calling myself a Hindu. I think when I was young, I was uncomfortable calling myself Hindu, because everybody would be like what does that mean and I could not really explain it. And then later I was learning so it was okay [to identify as a Hindu]. And now I am back to not being proud of being a Hindu in a public space because I don't want to be identified as that. At the same time on a personal level, I would never, never deny it. The more I read and the more I learn, being Hindu is not just how I grew up, but it is also having responsibility. If I am a Hindu and identify as one, then I have a responsibility to do something or at least say something.

One of the reasons for such divergent thoughts on Hinduism today is the exposure to multiple perspectives on the religion. Both women experienced Sunday school and participated in ethnoreligious events.

"Religiosity" and What It Meant to Research Participants

When the research participants talked about their levels of religiosity, it usually was a comparative concept. Individual interpretations of the term *religious* varied. For some it meant going to church or temple, or saying prayers before lunch or dinner; for others it meant having a little shrine in their dorm room or apartment, or saying prayers in the morning. For Hussan it became about learning more about the religion on his own and about trying to "live like a Muslim." During college, Hussan had two conversion experiences from Ismaili to Muslim – including a theological choice to accept the holy role of the Prophet Mohammed and of the five pillars of Islam. For many, their religious identity came to revolve around the issue of *knowledge* of the religion. Some did not define this idea as religiosity at all, but rather as a curiosity about their identity, a desire to "learn the rules," or to learn about how co-religionist classmates perceived their own faith and identity.

Others, when asked about religion, brought up lifestyle choices. Many of these research participants expressed a sense that while in college they did things that were "un-Hindu" or "un-Muslim" — such as drinking alcohol or engaging in premarital sex. As a result, many described college as a life stage when they were less religious; for some, this *moral compass* aspect of religious identity brought on crises of conscience as they engaged in acts they felt their parents and home communities would not approve of for religious reasons. Still others defined religiosity in terms of the Hinduism they had watched their parents and grandparents practice. For them, religiosity was a matter of following the *ritual* traditions of the faith — such as Friday prayers for Muslims. When

they did not participate in the lengthy and intricate ritual practice their parents did, these research participants felt they were not being "religious."

Although research participants represented the full range of Indian religious traditions, certain similarities can be identified as common across the religions. All respondents felt, at least to some extent, that before college religion was something they *had* to do for family reasons and that in college religious participation became a matter of choice. All felt they did not know as much about their home religion as they would like to. Most also considered their Indian *culture* — which, as they participated less in the organized religious practice of their home community, they could begin to define in terms separate from their religious community identity — to be more important than religion during the college period.

Among the cross-religious differences were several that particularly affected Christian research participants. Some, like Seema and Shiren, preferred to associate with their ethnic community (Indian Americans) than with non-Indian Christians/Catholics. For Hindus and Sikhs, their ethnic community and their religious community were one and the same; no such choice had to be made. Muslim research participants divided on the culture/religion choice. Where Muslim student associations were available, some participated in their programs while others made the culture-over-religion choice typical of Christian respondents. Christian and Catholic research participants also had easy access to a house of worship on campus; for Hindu, Muslim, Ismaili and Sikh students, those houses of worship — if they existed at all — were often far away. Hussan, for example, talked about getting picked up by a local Ismaili family to make the 42-mile drive to the Ismaili center for major holidays.

Conclusion

While not immediately apparent from the card-reading data, religion and themes of religiosity were salient and frequently-encountered factors in the ethnic identity development processes of virtually all of the 41 research participants. Their means of expressing devotion to or interest in religion were diverse. For most, the definition of "authentic" religious beliefs and observance grew out of what they were taught by their parents or by members of their ethnoreligious community, and by the unconscious cues from these same adult figures.

Religious experience during the K-12 life period was inextricably bound up with research participants' experiences within their families and ethnoreligious communities. Their parents had created organizations and built temples, mosques, and gurudwaras, for the purpose of maintaining culture and religion and passing those things along to them. To a tremendous extent, religion *was* community, with all its positive and negative connotations. It was a safe space or "refuge" where research participants who were religious minorities in their school could come to spend time with co-religionists their own age, a phenomenon that also occurred in religious youth camps during the K-12 period. It was something that many research participants at one time or another felt "dragged" to by their parents. It was associated with all the trappings of family and culture: Indian food and clothes, the presence of extended family and the expression of respect for elders, and the basis for certain parental rules. During college, the family and home religious community continued to be research participants' primary link to religion.

Consistent with what is known regarding cognitive development, late adolescence — the high school and college years — was a time of particularly concentrated attention to theological questions and ideas. At the same time, college was the first chance most research participants had to be separated from religion for long periods of time exploring life choices beyond the rules laid down by religion as their parents and/or communities had defined it. It a time when individuals began forgetting things about their family/home religion, but also a time when they first had the opportunity through college coursework to study their home religion in academic depth. Through academic and independent study and interaction with co-religionist classmates with different social or regional backgrounds, many research participants discovered that their home religious practice was not the "only way" their religion was practiced: an experience of cognitive dissonance that often led participants to ask even more questions. Religion became a "moral compass," reminding most research participants that alcohol consumption and pre-marital sex were wrong even as many of them engaged in those very activities.

During the adult life period, religion maintained much of the importance it had through participants' connection to their family and "home" religious community. It also became for the first time an issue of concern as it related to the *next* generation: Participants reported thinking a great deal about religion as they sought a life partner and thought about whether and how they would raise their children as practicing, knowledgeable members of the home faith.

Religion has multidimensional role in 1.5- and second-generation Indian American ethnic identity development. Through the conduits of culture, community,

family, and the experience feeling different from White classmates, as well as "on its own," religion is a crucial factor in shaping how the research participants thought about their families, defined their communities, and identified themselves across their life spans.

CHAPTER 7

EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AFFECTING ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Research participants reported facing different types of racial and religious discrimination throughout the lifetimes. Both the type of discrimination described and the impact felt by the individual varied across research participants. In this chapter, I separate experiences of racial discrimination from those of religious discrimination because I believe — as I will discuss in my analysis, below — the two must be understood separately to see clearly the very different types and levels of impact they have. Accordingly, I begin this chapter with a recounting of research participants' comments on racial discrimination. This is followed in the second half of the chapter with experiences of religious discrimination.

Racial Oppression

Racism occurs at institutional, individual and societal levels, and is experienced through both overt and covert acts of discrimination. In this first section, I am going to present the experiences of the research participants categorized into the following three categories:

- Covert Racism
- Overt Racism
- No Experience with Discrimination/"Anything But Racism"

I placed experiences into these four groupings not based on my analysis, but based on how the research participants described *their* understanding of the experiences.

This research strategy is important because in enables the reader to see not only what the experiences were but also what they meant to research participants. I am particularly interested in participants' perceptions of discrimination — or in their *not* perceiving discrimination in situations where another might. I want to highlight their perceptions as well as their experiences because I believe they will show how complex racism is in this country, as well as providing further data to show how we need to re-think our understanding of America's racial paradigm. I will discuss these issues at length in my analysis, below.

Batts' (1989) framework and other scholars who discuss overt and covert racism, while helpful in understanding the overt/covert distinction, is so oriented toward and based upon the experiences of African Americans in this country that it is self-limiting in ways that will become clear in this section and in the analysis to follow. As the next section will show, there is a strain of the Indian American experience which is very much like Batts' *overt racism* model and needs to be considered as such. But experiences of covert racism were more common among this study's research participants, and often the Black-White racial paradigm made it difficult for participants to "see" their negative experiences as having a racist character. In not understanding certain experiences to be "racism," research participants show that they have bought into the American idea of racism –- that "racism" is the harsh, direct, old-fashioned discrimination of the Jim Crow-era south.

Covert Racism

The covert racism experiences research participants described fell generally into five categories: non-selection, marginalization, hidden or "behind-your-back" racism, the model minority myth, and "the perpetual foreigner."

Non-selection, a major theme in a number of research participants' collegiate experiences, constitutes a group's unwillingness to associate with someone racially different — here, the research participant. Although they are far from the only arena where research participants felt not-selected because of their ethnicity — indeed, not getting picked for teams in gym class was a common K-12 experience for research participants' — the quintissential example of the group/outsider phenomenon in college is the fraternity or sorority.

Sororities and fraternities — the "Greek system" — are collegiate student-run institutions that often have histories and traditions as long and deep as the college's itself. To join a sorority or fraternity, students must take part in "rush" activities, including parties and interviews. The function of "rush" is to enable sorority and fraternity members to evaluate the candidates; it is, fundamentally, about *fitting in*. Interviewers ask "rushees" numerous questions in an attempt to acquaint themselves with the potential members. Both male and female research participants discussed their experiences with the Greek system at their colleges. Binita described such a rush experience that made her wonder whether it was her race and ethnicity that made her unwelcome:

> In my freshman year … I had this crazy idea of wanting to join a sorority… One of my good friends and I… signed up… to join the sorority and we had these interviews… The interviewer question[ed] me about my culture and [asked questions like,] "tell me where you are from."

Afterwards when she compared notes with her friend, Binita concluded "it must have been discriminatory, because my friend didn't get asked these kinds of questions about her culture or where she's from, and that was mainly because she was White." Binita was not invited to join the sorority — something for which she said she was "thankful," knowing what she knew.

Even for those who become members, identity continues to mark them as different from their "brothers." Two research participants described getting questions about culture from members of the White majority in their fraternities —questions which both felt conveyed the indirect message of not being entirely welcome there.

Marginalization is another form of modern-day racism. To experience marginalization is to feel "on the sidelines" of society, to be rendered racially or culturally invisible. To a certain extent, the non-selection phenomenon discussed above is an aspect of the marginalization experience; but marginalization encompassed a much larger set of experiences. A lot of research participants who grew up in "*very* White" towns, there was a constant feeling that they did not belong. Whether at school, in the neighborhood, at the store, or hanging out with friends, there was a sense of alienation. When they were little, some say, they couldn't even give a name to this feeling — but they felt it. Jaya and three other research participants constantly felt different because of their skin color, particularly being neither Black nor White.

In addition to marginalization and non-selection, covert acts of racism falling into category of *"behind-your-back" racism* occurred in a variety of social experiences. In one sense, it exemplifies the aspect of *covert* racism that is most vexing: the fact that often one just can't prove it. Julianne Malveaux calls this kind of racism "Have a nice

day" racism.[46] Farzad's experience with his first-year college roommate gave him a rare glimpse at this hidden racism.

Farzad's first encounter with racism in college was not through a personal experience but through the candor of a White roommate from a "backwoods" family. Farzad and his roommate got a long well; he described his roommate's family as "sort of a backwards family in Texas." After some time together his roommate revealed some of the of his family's concerns. "His uncle was a police officer, who was probably one of the most racist people I'd ever met. He used to tell him all the time, 'I don't want you living with that kid, we can get you moved out.'"

Farzad said his roommate spoke "very openly" about his family's thinking.

> His brother was the same way. His brother would come and stay with us once or twice in college freshman year and be very nice to me to my face, but my roommate told me he used to say [racist things] behind my back.

As a result, Farzad said, he became "super-consciously aware that the way people treat you to your face is very, very different from what they do behind your back." If one family can act this way, Farzad realized, "there must be several families like that, there must be towns, entire towns where maybe the level of discrimination isn't to call you nigger to your face, it's more subtle discrimination." This experience in his freshman year

> was the first time I was really exposed to something like that. I think . before [during K-12]... if there was racism, if I ever took note of it, it was because it was very blunt and because if they called me a name. Now I started to be more clued in to the fact that racism doesn't always mean, you know, they say something to your face.

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[46] Julianne Malveaux, in the *20/20* special "True Colors," described "have-a-nice-day racism" as the situation where Whites act kind and genteel toward a person of color but viciously behind his back.

Other research participants faced the *perpetuation of the model minority myth,* the American belief that "Asians are smart." When the model minority myth reared its head in Vishali's life, her Indian identity became the source of stress over her teachers' expectations:

> When I was a freshman [in high school], the senior class the valedictorian was Indian, so people assumed I would be the valedictorian of my school. It was as if she was looked upon as the model Asian. And I was like, "What the fuck!" That was so unfair! All the Indian people and Chinese people were lumped into one category and were supposed to do really well. And she [Lavina, the Indian valedictorian] grew up in a different household than me. Her parents were more supportive and much more loving. I grew up in a house with huge domestic violence issues. If I got anywhere it was because of what I did, not because my father created a wonderful environment. I would actually have to sneak out of the house to study because I could not concentrate 'cause I would get beat up. It was really unfair that I would be valedictorian. I mean Lavina had it really easy... I was always expected to work up to some level. That was good in one way. There were high expectations because you do live up to them.

Vishali experienced frustration and alienation, feeling she had to "live up to" expectations that were put on her because of her race and without regard to who she was or what she was dealing with.

Another form of covert racism, not usually recognized as such, is what I call *the 'perpetual foreigner' phenomenon*: racial oppression that was perpetuated by the dominant society in the form of xenophobia, the ridiculing of "foreigners," and the expression of sentiments that diminished research participants' sense of their own Americanness. Eight research participants described "perpetual foreigner" experiences. Manish, a Sikh who does not keep the turban, talked about a time when he got into an argument with a White classmate in high school and was told, "Go back to your own country." Shabnam described an incident when, seeing her brown skin, a Black woman assumed she was a foreigner:

> I actually was volunteering for *Raksha* [a social service organization] then. We were helping out at the Super Bowl… Me and my cousin were standing there and… a Black woman was directing us around, and she meanly said, "[Do] you guys speak English?" Or something… and me and my cousin both looked at her and we were about to – I was about to get really angry and were like, "what the hell?"… She immediately apologized… She was saying we were basically a fresh off the boat immigrant and that kind of irritated me.

The fact that the agent in Shabnam's experience was African American demonstrates one of the unique aspects of the 'perpetual foreigner' phenomenon: Instead of drawing a line between White and non-White, it separates people presumed to be American from those presumed to be "not from here," on the basis of physical appearance.

Even for the large majority of research participants who were born in the United States, remarks and assumptions like those, and questions like, "No, where are you *really* from?",[47] turn the only visible difference between the research participant and the speaker — the participant's brown skin — into something that renders him or her less American.

Overt Racism

Overt racism, also sometimes called "old-fashioned" racism, is a public, conscious act intended to harm or damage a person or a group of people of another race specifically because of the race of the victimized person or group. The overt variety consists of "a public, conscious, and intended act by a person or persons of one race with the intent of doing damage to a person or persons of another race chiefly because of the race of that second person or persons."

The experiences of at least ten research participants (25%) went beyond mere sensations of "neutral" difference to include negative — sometimes strongly negative —

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[47] Reported by over 50% of the research participants.

experiences. These were the research participants who developed an identity not merely as an "other" but as another who was less valued in the eyes of dominant society. Acts of prejudice and discrimination led these research participants to develop a sense of their own inferiority, and to feel low self-esteem and sometimes resentment or anger. This anger could be directed at dominant society as the agent of their oppression, or towards their parents or their community for being different.

Since positive or neutral images of Indians were simply absent from the popular media, this was a level of identity where world events and the media most directly impacted the lives of research participants like Parth. He recalled sensing racial difference during middle school, "when the Iran hostage crisis was going on."

> I remember a couple of kids mistaking me for being Iranian. And, you know, just saying some stuff about it. And that's when I think I felt it a little bit. But I think it was always there under the surface… So you always sense, this sense of kind of racial differences.

The news media and Hollywood provide an active link between our view of America's and the world's social structure – its demography, its laws, its customs, its threats – and our conception of what race means. Mina and others recalled constantly being badgered about the living conditions in India. Questions like "Do you see elephants on the street? Do you live in huts in India?" were neither innocent nor innocuous; they were frequent and they were often presented in a taunting manner. There was a constant depiction of India as a poor country and a land of savages. Hollywood's portrayal of Indians eating monkey brains in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* ricocheted through the lives of Indian young people across America:

> They'd make fun of the whole Indian thing and, you know, like the Native American as opposed to Indian and say stuff like, you know, "What's the

> dot for?" Or, "Do you guys eat monkey's brains?" Just, just the stupidest stuff, like what they'd see in *Indiana Jones* and stuff like that.

Girish described an even more vivid experience, one that involved a direct racial slur:

> Um, one specific event stands out is, uh, we were in the cafeteria and I don't remember what we were doing, but we made a mess or something, and this one kid goes, he looks over at me, directly at me, and he says, "Hey, nigger, you need to clean this up." That really made me notice, or made it stand out to me more that I was different from everybody.

Six research participants, including both women and men, reported being called "nigger" and "sand nigger" at some point in their lives. Many research participants described other instances of verbal abuse from strangers. Priti recalled

> a time when a friend of mine and I were dressed in Indians clothes. And we were crossing the street and so [a group of White men] yelled, "Why are you dressed like that? It isn't Halloween!" I remember being really mad at that.

Avinash recalled a time not too long ago when his father was pulled over by the police in New Jersey:

> I just feel like they [the police] have something in for me… A cop in New Jersey was ticketing my dad for a parked car in the wrong place, and my dad asked him what he did wrong… He said, "You can't park behind that car," and… the way he said it was so ridiculously condescending, I'm thinking there's no way he's like this with everybody. I said, "Don't talk to my father like that."

In college, Alok faced overt racism from members of his fraternity in the form of increased hazing — more abusive behavior from older "brothers" than was meted out to his White classmates. "I joined a fraternity there…I was the first Indian in that fraternity…and it was rough I was hazed a lot, but I got hazed more than anyone from another person…it was outright racist."

No Experience with Racism/ "Anything But Racism"

A number of research participants reported having no experiences with "racism." Others described race-based incidents or remarks but attributed them not to racism but to other factors. The thoughts of this group of research participants offer insight on the broad range of ways research participants perceived (or failed to perceive) and understood incidents that occurred as as result of their race. For example, Irfan claimed not to have experienced "racism" in the K-12 period, but promptly went on to describe certain experiences which might be described as equivocal:

> Raleigh, North Carolina, the Research Triangle area, is a pretty, it's honestly a pretty northern city when you look at demographics… and lots of university professors, lots of educated professionals…maybe a couple of times at the beach we got funny stares… if I think really hard, I could maybe think of times when I would maybe say maybe we're not being served first at a restaurant.

Irfan described being stared at and getting poor service at restaurants, but noted two reasons why his experiences had not been "racism": his hometown is "a pretty northern city" and it is populated by "a lot of educated professionals."

Only a few research participants talked about racial discrimination during the college years, those who did brought up issues pertaining to institutional and societal racism. Most of the research participants who reported not experiencing racial bias during their college years attributed that to the collegiate setting, which in Shabnam's words meant being around "open-minded" and "liberal" people. Several research participants described college as feeling like "an improvement" over their K-12 experience.

It was during the adult period that at least 25 research participants (60%) said they had not experienced any racial discrimination. This group includes some who experienced racism during earlier life periods. For example, Binita — who believed she'd been rejected by a sorority for being Indian — remarked that she experienced no discrimination of any type as an adult because she works at "the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention… This is a very highly educated group…, they are very knowledgeable about culture…, and they appreciate different cultures."

Three research participants stated that they had *never* experienced racism in their lives. These three participants attributed their inexperience with racism to the specific environment they were in; they work, respectively, in the information technology (IT) sector, in an academic research environment, and in the business arena. Sarvesh, the businessman, there is no racism in his field today because "in business, it is about bottom line and therefore it is more cut and dried. If you do the work you are fine [and you will experience no racism]." (In college, Sarvesh had remarked, "Whenever we were going out, it was definitely a melting pot — Indian, Chinese, etc.")

Although she is not among these four research participants because of her sorority experience, Binita's comment about racial experiences typifies their worldview:

> Personally, my philosophy or my way of doing things is that I don't really focus on those things…so even if I was discriminated against, I think I probably would have overlooked something like that… I mean, these are things that – are blatant things that I'm telling you… if something was pretty subtle, I wouldn't have noticed it.

Rudeness, inappropriate attention, condescension — all could be written off as something besides racism by people like Binita. When asked about experiences like these, Anita said, "They're going to be rude, regardless of whether you're White or

Indian and what... I view somebody who's been that way as just rude versus discriminatory." For others, fact that they had not dealt with any specific and concrete disadvantage or failure in life was evidence that racism had not affected them. Deepali was typical of this group when she remarked, "I wouldn't have any way of knowing. I got into every college I applied. I got into every law school. I got the firm job I wanted, so as far as any sort of indication [of discrimination], none."

"Ignorance," Not Discrimination

Other research participants chose to attribute certain experiences to "ignorance." Asked about racism, in fact, Shiren specifically remarked, "[I] never experienced discrimination. Experienced a lot of ignorance, just never discrimination." She then recounted this experience:

> I was at a Blockbuster trying to get a video and actually one of my other roommates, this was when we were in North Carolina, she, Shuba and I were getting a movie and the guy looked at us and he goes, "Do you wear those dots on your head?" And we were like, you know, "No, we don't wear them." But he goes, "I thought they were painted on." Like, "No, they're not painted on, you know, they're used now for decoration, whereas before they used to be a sign of, well, marriage." We were explaining it to him and he goes, "Well, where exactly is India? Is it next to America?" We were so frustrated. The – we stepped back and we explained it to him, and after you do that, you feel like okay, good, at least now someone is educated a little bit more than they were about India.

To be fair to the video store guy, there really is a difference between ignorance and discrimination. Faced with someone who asks, "Where's India?", Shiren reasonably considered the experience not to be one of discrimination. But mere ignorance, too, had an effect on research participants: For participants like Shiren and Suhas, their ethnic and racial background was a matter of occasional or frequent discussion, and while that

discussion was not abusive in nature it nevertheless put their ethnic identity into issue. Even more, others' lack of knowledge about India in a way minimized Indianness, by demonstrating to research participants that their country of origin was so insignificant, so not a part of non-Indians' lives, that some did not even know what or where India is.

Analysis and Discussion

As a threshold matter to the discussion of racial oppression of Indian Americans, one must recognize the historical racial ambiguity of Indians in the United States. From the 1700's and 1800's when the term "hindoos" was used to describe all Indian immigrants (regardless individuals' actual religion) (Chan, 1991; Takaki, 1989) to the 1924 decision of *Bhagat Singh Thind v. United States* to the 1970 Census, the "race" of Indians has been ambiguous (Espiritu, 1992; Lott, 1998; Prashad, 2000). Many scholars have studied the history of Indians in the U.S. and examined their racial ambiguity and how that affects the Indian American population (Prashad, 2000; Shankar & Srikanth, 1998a). The research participants discussed in the early part of this chapter confirm that racism and the historical racially "ambiguous" history of Indian Americans impacts second generation Indian Americans.

Such treatment reflects the place of Asian Americans in America's racial conversation; in a Black-White paradigm, Asians are the "other." Moreover, because of the association of the term *Asian American* with people of East Asian descent (Chinese, Japanese, Korean), South Asian Americans are the "other^2" — invisibles among the invisible. Indian Americans are invisible in this big world of American racial dialogue and the entertainment media; this invisibility manifested itself in the day-to-day lives of research participants in their schools and communities.

Having acknowledged this racial ambiguity and invisibility, there are a multitude of issues that arise out of research participants' experiences. I choose to focus on two in particular, because they give me the opportunity to add new themes and observations to the academic conversation on race: two new forms of covert racism to supplement Batts' (1989), and the tendency of second-generation Indian Americans to engage in *distancing* on issues of race.

The first theme arises from the remarks of those research participants who said they never experienced any "*real* racism" — a concept which means, in Anya's words, "no big experience [of racism]." This thinking is emblematic of the American conceptions of racism and discrimination, which grow out of the stark, overt and often violent experiences of African Americans since the colonial era; as the research participants and their parents understood the American social history, this and this alone was "racism." Recall that the alienation many research participants reported, particularly during the K-12 life period, was largely due to skin color. Many described wishing they were White, but all quickly added that it wasn't that they didn't want to be Indian from a cultural standpoint — just that they wished they could shed their brown skin. Thus the link between oppression and skin color was there in the minds of research participants. However, they did not go on to think of the abuse they suffered as brown people to be racism, because that term was proscribed by traditional American images of what "old-fashioned" racism was.

I believe one of the reasons many participants did not "see" racism when it happened to them is that the sociohistorical context of Indian Americans is so different from that of African Americans. This difference clearly affected many research

participants' outlooks on racism and what constituted a "racist" act. Many second-generation Indian Americans do not feel that certain comments that have been made or treatment has anything to do with racism.

Batts identifies five types of modern-day, "covert" racism: Dysfunctional Rescuing, Blaming the Vicitm, Denial of Difference, Avoidance of Contact and Denial of Political Significance of difference. Many of the themes in my research overlap with these and other scholars' conceptions of overt and covert racism. However, the experiences of the research participants in my study demand that we add To Batts' list two new forms of covert racism prevalent in the Asian American experience: the 'Perpetual Foreigner' Phenomenon and Perpetuation of the Model Minority Myth. We need to broaden our understanding and definition of covert or modern-day racism to include these new forms.

Like other covert racist experiences, these can be difficult to prove. Recall, for example, Binita's experience "rushing" sororities. Questions about one's culture or ethnic identity are not out of line *per se*, but it is easy to see how such questions — or even the display of certain attitudes, or using a certain tone of voice — could make an individual feel unwelcome. They are manifestations of the fraternity/sorority member's unease about bringing someone *different* into the group. Questions about a person's background in this context become a proxy for the message, "You are different, and we're not sure you'll fit in with us." Likewise, the presumption that someone with Asian phenotypic features is unlikely to speak English well, or to speak it without an accent, is a manifestation of the 'Perpetual Foreigner' idea.

Likewise, the Model Minority Myth is a form of covert racism because it causes people to ascribe certain qualities to an individual based solely on that individual's race. Its effects are most pronounced during the K-12 life period, because of the impact that teachers' expectations had on research participants. The impact in individuals' lives of the Model Minority Myth can vary: an Indian American who is an "average" student can feel like an underachiever, or an Indian American student with a love for writing or a fascination with history could end up steered toward math or the sciences because of teachers' assumption that those subjects are what Indian Americans are "good at." Whether consciously or unconsciously, teacher may not give an Indian American student the extra time and attention she needs because that teacher accepts the notion that *as an Indian American* the student is inherently better at academics. Moreover, the myth itself is constructed by the dominant White society as part of a "divide and conquer" strategy; it helps keep the White structure in power by perpetuating a division between Asians and other minority groups.[48] This arises from what Prashad (2001) calls "state selection," the fact that most of the early-arriving Indian Americans had the educational and socio-economic background that resulted in their children achieving academically. Further discussion of this issue will appear in the next draft.

Turning to my second point, the data reveal Indian Americans's inclination to engage in what I will call *distancing* on issues of race: choosing to characterize negative race-based encounters with White Americans as "anything but racism." Parents in particular seem resistant to using terms like "racism" to describe negative encounters with White Americans; I believe this is because they are uneasy seeing themselves as "minorities" in

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[48] Many Asians have bought into the "model minority" idea.

the same way Blacks and Latinos are minorities in America. Arriving in the U.S. and surveying the racial landscape here, the immigrant generation wanted to distance themselves from Blacks and Latinos. I will elaborate on this issue as it also arise for the second generation.

Fisher (1996) notes that Indian students who have such experiences with racism often cannot turn to their parents for guidance, since Indian immigrant adults have rarely experienced this personal racial harassment and can give little advice on countering it. One facet of this is a basic unfamiliarity or failure to understand racial discrimination as it takes place in America; raised in a country where the important social clevages are over issues of religion, case, and language/region, Indian immigrants are new to the idea of *race*, as such, being a marker of social difference. Furthermore, many parents, because they are educated, affluent and professional, think of themselves as White and deny that they or their children might be victimized. Just as the American definition of "racism" as harsh and overt renders forms of covert racism invisible, so the idea of "racism" as something that happens to segment of the population that is perceived as disproportionately under-educated and poor — Blacks and Latinos — makes it hard for Indians to see things that happen to them in their affluent suburban communities as "racism." For many Indian immigrants, there is a powerful need to disassociate from Black Americans and Mexican Americans (Singh, 1998). There is the notion of "wanting to become White" (Volokh, 1999), and a set of ideas that many non-Indians in the U.S. also believe that Asians are the upwardly-mobile minority. This desire to disassociate from other racial minorities is further fostered by the model minority myth. What is lost in this disassociation is that issues of minority rights in this country are not based on

which minority one is, and when these things also impact the Indian American community.

There were many ways that research participants distanced themselves from racism because they did not "see it." They labeled it many things, just not discrimination. Binita and other research participants would sooner overlook subtly racist experiences, or chalk any negative feelings she did have up to "people internaliz[ing] things," rather than see racism and call it by its name. Because of their parents' unwillingness to recognize racism, these rps put up psychological barriers. Parental denial led research participants to doubt their own experiences and to be disinclined to report experiences to their parents again. Because the most important authority figures of their childhood have denied the racist character of their negative experience, they develop a disability to "see racism" even when it's right in front of them.

Religious Oppression

Hindu, Muslim, Jain, and Sikh research participants faced religious oppression while growing up in the United States. *Religious oppression* is the systematic subordination of members of the Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Tao, and other non-Christian belief systems by members of the Christian religion. This subordination is supported by the actions of individuals, by cultural norms and values, and by the institutional structures and practices of society. Antisemitism is a more commonly recognized form of religious oppression. Religious oppression is a question of power; it is about unequal relations of power in society, and about how people use their Christian identity to marginalize, exclude, and deny privilege and access to non-Christian groups in

society. This chapter focuses on the religious oppression faced by Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, and Ismaili research participants.

Institutional Forces: U.S. Government, the News Media, and "Hollywood"

The media and even representatives of the U.S. government has done little to educate and much to exacerbate the "other-izing" of religions beyond the Judeo-Christian. These outlets — the news media, the government, and popular movies and television — have always been the source of what most Americans know about skin color and the religions and cultures of the non-western world. From the direct association of Islam with terrorism in movies like *Executive Decision* to former President George H.W. Bush's purposeful mispronunciation of Saddam Hussein's name[49] during the Persian Gulf War, for some research participants, the dominant American culture has shown nothing but disinterest in and disrespect for fundamental pieces of their identity, particularly their religious identity. During the Persian Gulf War, the focus of America's popular ire was the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, but given the vividly-expressed attitudes of government spokesmen and the unenlightened coverage by the news media, it was a small step to the notion of all brown-skinned Muslims as the enemy. Such stereotypes about people from the Middle East and about Islam impacted how Indian American research participants were treated in school and in society. Research participants faced overt and covert religious discrimination.[50]

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[49] "SAD-em," rather than the correct "sud-AHM."

[50] I elaborate upon this topic in Chapter 8 where Farzad is one of the profiles.

Although he had been witness to racist attitudes against other groups ("My peers… would always make fun of Black people by using the n-word."), it was during the Gulf War that Hussan first had racial epithets hurled at him. During the Gulf War period, Hussan was called "camel jockey," "sand nigger," and other slurs typically associated with things Arab and Muslim: "9th grade was very difficult. It would take forms of like verbal and physical assaults."

Media stereotypes of Muslims also affected research participants who were not Muslim. Parth, a Hindu, said he was "always being mistaken for a Muslim" during the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979. Although only 10 years old at the time, Parth still recalls

> I didn't at first [experience discrimination] when the Iran hostage crisis was going on, I remember a couple of kids mistaking me for being Iranian. And, you know, just saying some stuff about it. And that's when I think I felt it [discrimination].

Hollywood, a major institution in American culture, is another culprit in perpetuating stereotypes that made life difficult for research participants during the school years. Although Hollywood films are produced for entertainment purposes and are "fiction," fiction in our society has a way of becoming a reality. Even a single movie can shape how stereotypes are formed about certain groups. Although the "Arab terrorist" film was a particularly popular genre in the 1980s and 1990s, other films came out during this period that presented affected how Indian culture and Hinduism in particular were perceived by the dominant society. Movies like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* — which featured a villain who offered human sacrifices to the goddess Kali and forced his enemies to drink blood — was torture for Indian kids in school. One scene in the movie shows Indians sitting down to a meal of bugs, live snakes and

"monkey brains" following a religious ritual. In middle school, Shiren's classmates would ask her:

> "What do you guys eat at home?" You know, just silly things, [like] "do you eat monkey brains?" … It's ignorance, pure ignorance. And when you're that young, it has an effect on you... there were times that I felt like I didn't belong. I felt insecure.[51]

The media as an institution play a large role in the socialization of American youth. By playing on stereotypes, however inaccurate or caricatured, the American media affected how research participants' classmates saw them, and how they saw themselves.

Schools and the Workplace

In a few cases, Christian oppression inflicted actual scholarly or personal harm on research participants. Suhas was denied the chance to play on his school's soccer team because he refused to participate in Christian worship:

> I participated in athletics and every time, while we played a game, the coach would made us recite the Lord's Prayer, and I stopped doing it, and I said, "I'm not going to do it," and I would walk away. And he would yell at me to get back in the group because, you know, you're breaking up team spirit, yadda, yadda, and I said, "No, I'm not going to do it, I'm not going to be there." So I got benched and I was benched for the rest of the season, sat on the bench, and I would always come in within like two minutes, but he wouldn't start me because I wouldn't ever be in the huddle for the Lord's Prayer.

He let the coach know that she thought he was being unfair. The coach said to him:

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[51]Shiren's experience is a perfect example of how religion is racialized in the United States. Shiren, a Catholic, attended parochial school. Everyone in school knew she was Catholic, but also that she was Indian. Farzad, an Ismaili, discussed this phenomenon in detail: "Yeah, they [being Indian and being Muslim] are pretty much the same. I mean I felt like, you know, Muslim equated to brown skin, which I would like to shed. You know, if I was a white Muslim, I'm a white Muslim; who's going to know, who's going to bother?" The topic of racialization of religion is part of my future research plan.

> "If you want to be an individual, you be an individual and you can think about it for the first part of the game, and when you're ready, when I think you're ready to be a team player, I'll put you in the game."

For Suhas' coach, the only way to be a "team player" was to pray like a Christian. The result for Suhas — by his account "the best player on the team" — was having to start every game on the bench.

A few research participants reported being denied certain privileges or awards for religious reasons. Satish and his brother applied for a major scholarship sponsored by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars lodge. The pair ended up as two of four area young people to reach the final round of the competition. (Interestingly, the other finalists, who were White and Christian, were also brothers.) In the interview process, Satish was asked what religion he was; he told the interviewer he was Sikh. He was asked if he "had any plans" to convert to Christianity, and he replied that he did not:

> The veterans were these like five White guys and they each took each of us separately and interviewed us… and when they interviewed me, they asked me, "What religion are you?" I said, "I'm Sikh," and they said, "What is that type of thing?" And they go, "Oh, so you're not Christian."… I [said] "no." They [asked], "Do you see yourself at any point converting to Christianity?" … I said "no"….and I think I was, for a lack of a better word, a wimp, so I was really polite and said, "No, I don't think I am going to do that."

When he learned that the scholarship had gone to one of the Christian brothers, Satish was convinced they had been victims of discrimination. His reaction to this experience — and his failure to react earlier — are typical of second-generation Indian Americans. As a Sikh, Satish had experienced more subtle religious discrimination throughout their K-12 experience, and had put up with it silently. He reasoned, it's not actually "getting in my way." It was only when a discriminatory act actually got in the way of achieving

success as it had been defined for them by their parents — academic success, and getting a good education — that they were moved to respond. When they learned they'd been denied the scholarship, the brothers wanted to write a letter to the local newspaper and even considered legal action. But their parents — particularly their father, a physician who "told us he had a lot of patients in town" — discouraged them from responding, and so Satish remained silent once again.

For Avya, who grew up in Florida, high school was a tumultuous time both because she was a Hindu and because she was a person of color. She experienced both verbal and physical threats, and had her car vandalized after speaking out publicly against a hate group's recruiting in her school. Fighting back against religious abuse made her even more of a target:

> In high school religion became a hot issue. Because in our area the Aryan Nation was recruiting. People from school were expelled. Swastikas all over the school. I was editor of the school paper. I would write scathing editorials. I started getting a name for that. The constant "you're going to hell" was a very big theme. It was a very ostracizing atmosphere for those of us who weren't Christian.

Notice how for Avya, Christianity and Christian proselytizing have become associated with White supremacy. For many research participants — and, one might guess, for their attackers — the line between race and religion was narrow when it existed at all.

From the interviews it is clear that research participants' experiences with religious oppression in college had a more profound effect on their self-image than in the pre-college years. The oppression, while no more or less frequent than it had been during K-12, was felt at a deeper level than it had been before. By college, many research participants had a better understanding of their religious and cultural heritage; those that didn't at least felt they *wanted* to have a better understanding, and therefore the idea of their religious identity

as important had more resonance than it had had in their K-12 years. As a result, prejudicial remarks or religious discrimination experienced during the college years cut deeper for the research participants. Avinash shared an experience he had:

> It didn't mean much for me on a day to day basis except for when I was faced with things that made me sort of angry from other people. Like, um, I have a very good friend who's still a good friend of mine, who's Christian, and who would sometimes, um, sometimes – he would be very condescending at times towards Hindu religion and he was very dogmatic about some of the beliefs in Christianity….. I would say we're all sort of finding different ways to reach God, and that there's not a particularly best way and you shouldn't judge that all people who don't choose to worship God the way you do are automatically going to hell, which is essentially what he was saying.

Avinash described himself as "secular" rather than observant; his religious identity was a part of his day-to-day life; yet here it became salient when it became the object of discriminatory remarks and conduct. In this case, the ridicule came from someone with whom Avinash otherwise had a close and friendly relationship with. However, it didn't take a close relationship with the agent of discrimination to make it resonate with research participants.

In college, many research participants reported feelings of being un-represented, of having no place to go and no peers with whom to share the experience of being a religious minority. Hussan, for example, remarked that in college "it is very difficult to be a Muslim, [or] to be anything at that university other than a Black Christian or a White Christian or a Jew." Being Muslim made life "difficult" in a way that Hussan believed was unique and not shared by members of two other religious groups: Christians, the American majority; and Jews, a religious minority community which has had about 60 years longer to develop its visibility on the American scene and to build religious institutions on college campuses.

Even in their adult life period, research participants are not immune from encounters with those who would malign or misrepresent their religions. Such experiences continue to "cut deep." For example, although Anand identifies as Atheist, he is the son of Hindu parents and he experienced anger and hurt when a co-worker made fun of Hindu tradition:

> I've had the conversations [at work] where someone will ask me like, "In Hinduism, you worship idols" — you know, and — "well, according to the Bible, if you practice idol worship, you will go to hell." … [angrily] Don't talk to me about, like, going to hell… That indicated that they're not open to other religion– even though I wasn't religious …when I think about …Indian gods like Krishna and…things like that, its personal.

Bipin said he'd seen people "on TV" use words like "towel-head" to refer to Middle Easterners, and in particular to Sikhs, but was still surprised when his own co-worker could not learn the word "turban" and repeatedly referred to Bipin's religious headgear as a "towel":

> I kind of saw stuff on TV … [but] I didn't really think it applied, but like this one guy who sits next to me, he says, you know, he's just -- every now and then he says like silly stuff. Um, like, like he didn't, he does, he didn't know that it was called a turban so he would, he would say, you know, towel or something like that for a couple times.

Society

Another form of religious oppression mentioned as over the lifespan by at least seven research participants was evangelism or proselytizing — the attempt by Christians in the community to force Christianity on research participants and their families. Anisa was a religious person and found it offensive that Christians wanted to save Hindus: "There was a family across the street that always wanted to convert my parents. Nice family. Kids liked my parents. They just would always say to us that 'you should come

to church, you need to be saved.'" Anand also took offense to the barrage of proselytizing and conversation attempts that he was subjected; even though he was not a religious believer, he considered Hinduism to be part of his cultural identity and was deeply angered by such interactions with Christians. Anand said Christian evangelists' argument often emphasized the illegitimacy of Hinduism as a religion:

> I had so many conversations…about Jesus Christ and the Bible and everyone is like, you know, Jesus Christ will save you… I mean, it was annoying. It was just, it was just annoying because, you know, they would just never stop. Every day it's the same. And my response to that was, you know, "there's freedom to practice religion in America."… and don't talk to me about going to hell. So that was, that. That indicated that they're not open to other religions….it was a weird experience. That – even though I wasn't religious, I still sort of get angry when I think about … [the way they talked about] Indian gods like Krishna and things like that, so its personal.

One research participant reported even more explicit, sometimes violent, discrimination against their religious community. Anita described the desecration, while she was in high school, of the Hindu temple she and her family attended: "I remember once when the temple had been vandalized. People had come in and like spray painted and broke in the statues and stuff like that." Anita was one of three research participants who reported fearing for their own physical safety during high school because of religiously-based harassment or violence.

Religious discrimination could be experienced as deeply personal even when it wasn't so personal at all — when it was part of undirected, "wholesale" Christian outreach. Saleena described encounters with "preachers" distributing Bibles outside her dormitory:

> Fine, I don't mind that. You pass by and you take one, you smile and you go on. [But] one night right outside of my door, there was a minister or somebody, and he was really pushy, he just kept on and he would not let

> up about the Bible and all that. And that made me really angry, because someone was pushing something at me and trying to make me think that my religion wasn't good. That experience has changed the way I see religions now. I feel that is has made more opinionated. Before I just coasted through. I did not have a lot of opinions about religions, I just was trying to learn. After this I have a lot more opinion.

Research participants experienced religious oppression at many levels, from Hollywood's inaccurate and hackneyed portrayals of Muslims and Hindus and the vigorous evangelism of American Christians, being denied the opportunity to play sports or participate fully and safely in the college social scene. It didn't matter whether the research participant was herself a "religious" person or not; the maligning or marginalization of their home religions left a deep and sometimes painful mark on the participants' identity development process.

The "Gray Area" Between Racial and Religious Oppression

For some research participants, religious and cultural oppression occurred in ways that make it difficult to say whether it was their religion or their culture that was under attack. As an observant Sikh, Bipin found it more difficult to participate equally in the college social scene, both on-campus and off:

> Um, like, just like silly stuff like "towel head."… I went to Dartmouth once and like we're, we're trying to get a drink there and like this guy is like, "Sorry, we don't, we don't serve turbans," or something like that. And he was just trying to be like a jerk and like and like, um, I don't know,and so like stuff like that. Uh, uh, people would grab my turban or something on the dance floor, and like stuff like that. Let's see. And like, just like, I mean, like if we go out or anything, people would just say like, people would just say stuff in passing that they wouldn't think I'd hear or something like that, like, you know, "what is that thing anyway?" Just like stuff like that, um, which like me and my friends, I guess, just got used to after awhile.

Bipin's experience is relevant because while the other party-goers' actions could be seen as racially prejudicial in nature – indeed, another Indian American might very well understand the situation that way – for Bipin it felt like an act of religions discrimination. Because he identifies as a strongly religious person, and because his turban is part of his religious identity, the impact on him of people messing with or commenting on his turban is that of a *religiously* discriminatory act. As I discuss in the following section, this may mean such acts have a different and deeper impact on Bipin than "racist" acts would.

Analysis and Discussion

I have laid out the material in Chapter Seven as I have — separating racial and religious oppression experiences — to acknowledge that there are important distinctions between these two types of oppression. Although both involve acts of discrimination, crucial and thus far unacknowledged differences exist in how acts of racial and religious oppression are perceived by and affect the identity development processes of second-generation Indian Americans.

I believe it may be easier for people to disregard racism based on skin color which for some research participants is associated with skin color and aspects of ethnic culture(conflation of race and ethnic culture) verses discrimination based on religion. Having said that, I am not at all try to "distance" Indian American Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs from seeing the implications with other target groups. My main interest here is to show that discrimination based on region has a different type of impact than racial discrimination in the ethnic identity development process for second generation Indian Americans. And there are implications to consider for target groups whose members associate "strongly" with Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, or Jainism.

Avya's story of being targeted by the Aryan Nation and by White Christian classmates illustrates a closeness between racial and religious oppression. For many research participants — and, one might guess, for their attackers — the line between race and religion was narrow when it existed at all. For example, non-Indians' reactions to Bipin's turban were probably a mix of racial and religious oppression, ignorance and curiosity — but to Bipin, anything said or done to his turban took on religious significance because keeping the turban is a religious matter for him. And that is the key point, and one of the most important revelations arising out of this study: that the impact of religious oppression takes on *religious* dimensions.

Research participants offered a clear sense that their experiences with religious oppression in college, while no more or less frequent, had a more profound effect on their self-image that those they dealt with in the pre-college years; the oppression was felt at a deeper level than it had been before. By college, many research participants had a better understanding of their religious and cultural heritage; those that didn't at least felt they *wanted* to have a better understanding, and therefore the idea of their religious identity as important had more resonance than it had had in their K-12 years. It is for this reason that we must consider not only how racism impacts ethnic identity development but how religious discrimination impacts the process also, and that we must as much as possible separate religious oppression from other forms of racist oppression in order to understand it.

The constant ridiculing and proselytizing and the occasional violence have shown to have dramatic and sometimes lasting effects the research participants. Racial experiences were sometimes "laughed off" by research participants; religious oppression

more often took a heavy toll on them. "Religion is personal," remarked Alok, who although he identifies as an Atheist becomes very defensive about religion because it is something sacred for those he is closest to: his family and friends. Based on the experiences of the research participants in this study, individuals reacted at a more personal level when they experienced religious discrimination as compared to racial discrimination. It's one thing to be made fun of for your food, and it's another to be made fun of for your religion. No research participant reported that being taunted for eating "weird" food made them want to learn to cook — but most of the research participants who reported being victims of religious discrimination said it pushed them in one or two directions.

The **first path**: Religious discrimination led some research participants to learn more about their respective religion as way of strengthening their religious identity and having a line of defense against the ridiculing and proselytzation. As noted in Chapter Six, most research participants did not have much detailed knowledge about their religion and its tenets; although most participated in religious activities with their parents, few had yet thought a great deal about their own religious identities or invested the time in discussing religion or reading sacred texts. Of her neighbors' proselytizing Anisa said, "things like that really pushed me to learn about Hinduism." She began asking her parents more question about the religion and reading books about Hinduism. Typical of the first-path reaction, Anisa wanted "ammunition" — she wanted to be able to respond credibly to proselytes' appeals to find Christ or go to hell.

The **second path:** Religious attacks led other research participants to question their religion and belief system. Sweta's reaction is an example of the questioning

phenomenon. The discussions she had with Christian classmates in high school led her to question Hinduism:

> I feel like those years I was having conversations about Christianity and whether or not I was going to go to hell if I did not believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I would totally get paranoid about things like that.

Surrounded by Christian norms, finding little validation anywhere outside the home for the theological principles of their non-Christian faiths, research participants came to doubt the legitimacy of their parents' faith.

Regardless of which of these two paths participants followed, they were led to think more about their religious identity; many say they have now become more "religious." The same cannot necessarily be said for the research participants who experienced racial discrimination, either overt or covert. Not a single research participant described an act of racial discrimination leading to his or her wanting to seek knowledge or information about his/her race or to "strengthen" his/her identity as a person of color.

The impact of religious discrimination also arises out of the fact that religion is often seen as "never changing" and the idea that "religious bonds are stronger than cultural bonds." For some research participants, religion was a major association they had with their grandparents, parents or other adults. Even some of the least observant research participants described religion as a "more authentic" vehicle for group formation and cohesion.

Even for those research participants for whom religion is an expression of cultural identity — those who engage in "symbolic religion" or for whom participation in religious events is something they do primarily for the opportunity to socialize with their ethnoreligious community — religious discrimination may have as dramatic an "identity

impact" as it has for those to whom the devotional expression aspect of religion is important. For example, Avinash's response — resenting his "good friend['s]" tendency to "be very condescending… towards Hindu religion" — is not unusual among secular Hindus: His religious identity, while not otherwise a part of his day-to-day life, only becomes salient when it becomes the object of judgmental or otherwise negative attention. In this case, the vibrancy of Avinash's reaction arises at least in part from the fact that he cared about the person who was criticizing his home religion. However, it didn't take a close relationship with the agent of discrimination to make it resonate with research participants.

Conclusion

Research participants' experiences with racial discrimination had dramatic and varying impacts on them. Some were led to experience self-doubt or to wish they looked different. The research participants' experiences indicate several new avenues for academic research. The kinds of discrimination faced by the research participants go beyond understood norms of covert racism to include new phenomena such as the 'perpetual foreigner' phenomenon and the model minority myth. Likewise, the ways in which second-generation Indian Americans react to racial discrimination, particularly covert discrimination, is often a combination of denial and White apologism.

All these factors exist in a complex interplay with religious discrimination, particularly for those research participants who face societal religious oppression that manifests itself through discrimination, invisibility, and exoticization of Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, and other non-western faiths. Some research participants reacted to religious discrimination with self-doubt; others had strong defensive reactions, where religious

discrimination became the impetus for further learning about their home faith. All felt that religious discrimination was qualitatively different from racial discrimination; it cut deeper, and the ways research participants described experiences of religious oppression show that its impact on their ethnic identity development was profound. I am naming the complex interplay of religion and race, and the many nuanced ways in which religious oppression affects ethnic identity development, in future implications.

CHAPTER 8

IDENTITY CLUSTERS AND CONSTELLATIONS

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have identified and discussed salient factors affecting ethnic identity development in second generation Indian Americans. In this chapter, I show how these factors shape the ethnic identity development process and how the process follows multiple trajectories. I have identified some of the trajectories in the ethnic identity development process for second-generation Indian Americans based on the constellation of experiences of the 41 research participants. I will illustrate these commonalities by presenting and explaining four distinct groupings – *clusters of identity*. Within each of these identity clusters, there are commonalities – parallel experiences, shared perspectives – which I will touch upon, as well as distinctions that are worth noting. I was able to cluster 37 of the 41 research participants. The remaining four participants are not clustered and are not discussed in this document. Next, I will illustrate, through four in-depth profiles, the key themes and common characteristics that define the four major identity clusters.

I have identified four clusters of identity by using the research participants' self-identification labels, the qualitative data, and the card-rating data. At the heart of each cluster are the labels research participants gave for themselves — usually one- or two-word self-descriptors like "Indian," and "American," — at each life stage. Examining the data I found nearly half of the research participants identified in the same way across the life span; these individuals comprise Clusters I and II, those who identify as

"Indian" across the life span (15), and those who identify as "Indian American" across the lifespan (3).

Carefully examining the self-identification label research participants used, I identified constellations of experiences. I recognized one phenomena which formed the bases for defining Clusters III and IV: that of identities shifting from a dominant orientation in the K-12 years to an ethnic orientation moving across the lifespan . By *dominant orientation*, I mean an identity which is characterized less by attachment to ethnic or cultural factors and more by aspects of the dominant (White American) society — White norms, values and standards, often based on Christian (i.e., "American") ideals. By *ethnic orientation* I mean an identity that is heavily influenced by or incorporates "ethnic" factors such as dimensions of culture, language, religion, trips to India, or associations with one's ethnoreligious community; one has an ethnic orientation if any one of these factor(s) is of high salience, based on what the qualitative and quantitative data reveal. Thus Cluster III includes the research participant whose identity has shifted from ethnic to dominant orientation over the life span, and Cluster III includes those nine research participants whose identity has shifted from a dominant orientation to an ethnic orientation since the K-12 period.

Cluster IV includes those research participants who had some type of ethnic orientation during the K-12 years and then, through college and into adulthood, have grown to place an emphasis/importance on multiple parts of their ethnic identity. Therefore, I labeled this cluster "unidimensional orientation to a multidimensional orientation."

The final category, currently labeled "unknown," includes four research participants whose experiences are very difficult to describe and even harder to characterize as representing a particular trajectory. This group requires more discussion than I can properly give it in the context of this paper.

For these four clusters, it is the qualitative data that allows me to tease out the nuances of experience, giving color and texture to the cold, smoother surfaces of the quantitative data.[52] I will show specifically how the qualitative data inform this process when I present the clusters of identity in detail in the next section.

It is important to note that clusters and trajectories are not the same thing. For example, the 18 people in Clusters I and II who self-identify the same way in each life period across the life span give very different meanings to the ascriptive terms "Indian" and "Indian American." One "Indian's" ethnic identity development trajectory may be very different from another "Indian's." Clusters III through IV, on the other hand, bring together individuals who — while they self-identify using different words — share important aspects of their identity trajectories. While they cannot be described as "on the same trajectory," the individuals who find themselves together in a cluster demonstrate a variety of common experiences and outlooks that make their trajectories very similar.

After showing the broad commonalities that map the identity-development trajectories of the research participants, I provide profiles of four research participants representing each one of the clusters. While no single research participant can be described as "typical" in every respect, these four research participants illustrate well the

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[52] As Walters (2000) noted, to truly understand ethnic identity development, you must have the narrative process.

major themes uniting their respective clusters. These four cluster representatives, as a group, highlight the concept of multiple trajectories in ethnic identity development.

Table 8.1. Identity Cluster I. Individuals Identifying as "Indian" Across the Lifespan. (15)

Name	K-12	College	Adulthood	Religious Identification
Alok	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Anisa	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Bhrugesh	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Bindu	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Binu	Indian	Indian	Indian	Catholic
Dinker	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Jaya	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Mahesh	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Manish	Indian	Indian	Indian	Sikh
Mina	Indian	Indian	Indian	Atheist
Ravi	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Satish	Indian	Indian	Indian	Sikh
Seema	Indian	Indian	Indian	Christian
Sina	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Vinay	Indian	Indian	Indian	Sikh/Hindu

Table 8.2. Identity Cluster II. Individuals identifying as "Indian American" across the lifespan. (3)

Avinash	Indian American	Indian American	Indian American	Hindu
Bipin	Indian American	Indian American	Indian American	Sikh
Irfan	Indian American	Indian American	Indian American	Catholic

Table 8.3. Identity Cluster III. Dominant Orientation → Ethnic Orientation. (9)

Name	K-12	College	Adulthood	Religious Identification
Group A				
Anita	My parents are from India	Indian or previous	Indian or 1st column	Hindu
Anya	American but my parents are Indian	Indian, born here	I am born here but I am Indian	Hindu
Binita	American	Indian American	Indian or Gujarati *(based on context)*	Hindu
Nija	American of Indian extraction	Indian	I am of Indian background	Hindu
Sarvesh	American	American	American of Indian Descent	Hindu
Shiren	American of Indian Descent	Indian American	Indian Woman	Catholic
Sweta	Asian	South Asian	Indian	Hindu
Group B				
Suhas	I identified more with being White	Indian	Indian	Hindu
Smita	American	Indian American	Second-generation Indian American	Hindu

Table 8.4. Identity Cluster IV. Unidimensional → Multidimensional Orientation. (10)

Avya	Asian American and Indian American	Indian American	South Asian American, Indian American	Hindu
Ahalya		Indian American	South Asian	Hindu
Farzad	Indian American	African Indian American	Human Being	Ismaili
Saleena	Indian	Indian	South Asian	Hindu
Vishali	Indian	Indian	An open coloring book.	Hindu
Hussan	Ismaili	South Asian American Muslim	Muslim	Muslim
Monali	Indian	Indian Woman and Pakistani	I am of Indian and Pakistani descent	Hindu

Table 8.4. Identity Cluster IV, *cont'd.*

Name	K-12	College	Adulthood	Religious Identification
Parth	Indian	Indian American	Indian American	Hindu
Priti	Indian	Indian American	Indian American (sometimes SAA)	Hindu
Shabnam	Indian	Indian American	Indian American	Hindu

Table 8.5. The "Unknown" Group.

Anand	Indian	Nothing to do with being Indian	Nothing to do with being Indian	Atheist
Anila	Indian	South Asian or Asian Am.	Indian	Hindu
Girish	American	American	American	Jain

Table 8.6. Ethnic Orientation → Dominant Orientation. (1)

Deepali	Indian	Indian, born and raised in America	My parents emigrated from India, but I was born and raised here	Hindu

Clusters of Identity

Identity Cluster I, the single largest group, is made up of 15 participants who identify as "Indian" across the life span, in all three periods. What becomes very evident from the qualitative data is that while all 15 used the same self-identifier, "Indian," across the lifespan, the meaning of their Indian identity varies among research participants – that is, Sina's "Indian" is not Bhrugesh's "Indian" – and changes across the life span of individual research participants as well. There are four points of interest for this category.

First, many of the research participants identified as Indian because of skin color. For them, skin color is the marker of differentiation from other people and it is something they associate with ethnicity and their ethnic culture. The qualitative data further reveals

that many of these research participants conflate ethnicity and race. One of the other common features of these research participants in Cluster IA, is the belief, spoken or unspoken, that being Indian is literally something they were born into.

Second, some of the research participants in this cluster say they identify as "Indian" at least in part because that is what is expected of them by the dominant society. The "Indian" racial and ethnic identity label is ascribed *to* them *by* society, and therefore they feel that "this is how I must identify." Several research participants discussed the numerous times they are asked the questions like, "Where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?"

Third, two-thirds (10) of the research participants in this cluster described another part of their identity as more salient than their ethnic identity. When research participants mentioned another category, they were permitted to give that category a salience ranking like those in the Card Rating data; these other identities were all rated a "4" or "5" by the research participants who reported them. Examples of other salient identities for these ten research participants included: "gay," "academic/'being a good student,'" and athletic identities. In most cases, research participants discussed this particular identity and provided a rating number for the life periods in which the additional factor applied.[53]

Fourth, eight of the nine Hindu participants in this identity cluster can be identified as "culturally Hindu, " or "symbolically religious." This is demonstrated by the fact that most of these Hindus give a low score to religion in adulthood; the majority (5 of 9) gave religion a score 1 or a 2 in the Card Rating inquiry. Most describe themselves as "not very religious."

Identity Cluster II consists of the three research participants who self-identify as "Indian American" across the life span: a Sikh, a Hindu, and a Catholic. For the three men in this cluster, identifying as "Indian American" is about considering themselves to be different from India and Indians, including their parents, and about developing a sense of attachment to America. For all three, the salience of "nationality" is higher than the mean for the entire cohort of 41 research participants; none of them ranked it less than "3" in any life period, and all three ranked it a "4" in adulthood. For two, the salience of nationality increases in each life stage. This represents the importance research participants in this cluster put on their birthplace. All three were born in the United States, a fact which gives them a sense of "American-ness" that they see as a central factor in how they self-identify.

For example, Irfan believes that to the extent that he is Indian, he is Indian within the American political and cultural context. By choosing to identify as "Indian *American*," he emphasizes that he is fully "here" and tacitly expresses a sense that Indianness as he sees it within his community and his generation – through cultural shows and insular ethnoreligious communities – is less than Indians should be or could be, politically and socially, in American society.

As was the case for Cluster I, the qualitative data reveal that although members of Cluster II use the same self-identifier — "Indian American" — in every life stage, that they indeed take trajectories that are different for each participant and that vary in meaning and impact over the life span. Different factors are most salient for each research participant in this group. Bipin, for example, stated clearly that his religion is more important than his culture. He says he is Indian, but is "Sikh more." (See

Chapter 6.) For Irfan, who is Catholic, culture and his Indian community rate higher than religion consistently across the life span. Irfan talked a lot about the differences between Catholicism and Hinduism. As an Indian among Catholics in high school, Irfan felt more different from his classmates than he felt in college among Indian Hindus. That is, he was less comfortable among co-religionists than among co-ethnics. For Avinash , various dimensions of culture such as Hindi movies and ethnoreligious celebrations play the most prominent role in his life today.

Identity Cluster III, wherein research participants went from a dominant orientation to an ethnic orientation over time, includes eight individuals. These individuals can be divided into two "sub-groups." The first, Group A, includes those who have not had an encounter experience; the second, Group B, is made up of three people who have had an encounter experience, or a set of mini-encounters. An *encounter* is an experience that catches the subject "off guard" (Cross, 1991, p. 199). "The encounter must work around, slip through, or even shatter the relevance of the person's current identity and world view." For these individuals, the identity-shaping experience ranged from a single, upsetting encounter to a number of small encounters that eroded the respondent's specific salient identity. The encounter experiences involved ethnic cultural, religious or racial issues. For some the encounter took place during the K-12 life period, for others in college, and for still others it occurred as late as adulthood. For some, there were multiple encounter experiences spanning more than one life period.

For members of *Group A,* the move toward an ethnic orientation in their identity came about primarily when their social context changed from K-12 to college. Most individuals in this cluster went from having few co-ethnics in their area during the K-12

period to attending a college where there was a "critical mass" of co-ethnics. This dramatic change in social context resulted in more frequent and intensive interaction with other second-generation Indian Americans, with the impact being an increase in research participants' pride in their culture. The typical member of this group ranked cultural factors as less salient during K-12; for many, their "ethnic orientation" lay dormant during the middle school and high school years, which were times where people either compressed their ethnic identity or compartmentalized it because they did not have a place to express it (Royce, 1982). These individuals then went on to have pride-building experiences when they interacted with other second-generation Indian Americans during the college life period. In general, the research participants in this cluster found an ethnic community in college which provided a physical and visceral space for ethnic expression.

The second theme shared by Group A: all of them expressed serious concern over the transmission of various cultural and religious traditions and rituals to their offspring. Through their collegiate experiences, and often continuing into adulthood, they have developed not only an identity of their own but a concern that their children grow up exposed to the culture, language, and/or religion that is so important to the research participants themselves.

Group B – Suhas, Anya and Smita – all experienced encounters related to ethnic culture and religion.

Identity Cluster IV identifies behavioral and attitudinal shifts, of varying degrees, that combine to effect a shift in ten research participants' ethnic identity from an unidimentional identity orientation to a multidimensional identity orientation. Here, *unidimentional* refers to a focus on some specific aspect of ethnic culture (that is, "Indian

culture"). When the identity becomes *multidimensional,* the focus is no longer just on "Indian culture," but also on other factors such as religion, gender, or class. Based on the qualitative data of the research participants in this cluster, more than one social identity is salient at any given time for the individuals.

Different research participants moved in varying degrees from unidimentional to multidimensional. For Monali, issues relating to gender and an identification with multiple ethnic cultures – "Indian" and "Pakistani"[54] – were the factors that served as catalysts for her shift. Others, like Farzad, began in a more dominant-culture orientation, but shifted to an ethnic orientation that is best characterized as multidimensional. (Note his use of the self-ascriptive term "human being" during adulthood.)

Two themes characterizing research participants in this cluster emerge from the qualitative data. The first theme relates to community. In general, the research participants in Cluster IV did not have an attachment to the ethnoreligious community in their area during the K-12 period. The feeling of estrangement this caused for some research participants was for various research participants the product of the physical absence of a community, of lack of parental involvement in the local Indian community, of cognitive dissonance with one's ethnoreligious community, and/or of feelings of alienation and marginalization from the community. Where research participants reported feelings of marginalization and alienation, these occurred because some aspect of their family life such as domestic violence or different socio-economic class set them apart from other families in the ethnoreligious community. These characteristics made them feel different and somehow separate from or on the margins of their ethnoreligious

[54] Monali's father's village is near the "LOC," the Line Of Control in the northern part of India that at this time defines the border between India and Pakistan. National identities are created combining ethnic and religious cultures. This interplay is very complex and beyond the scope of this discussion.

community; sometimes that made them feel "the community" saw them as separate or different. For example, Vishali talking about how she would go to the temple and she and her brother would show up unkempt and would eat and people would stare at her.

The second shared phenomenon in the lives of research participants in this identity cluster is that all of them today have a certain awareness about the complexities of the Indian American community. Sometimes the product of their career choices and sometimes of their lifestyle choices, they all have in common an understanding that the Indian American community is not a "model minority." For example, research participants are working for domestic violence organizations, structuring their lives to accommodate commitments to their ethnoreligious community, and spearheading events to highlight social and civic issues facing the Indian American community. All of these research participants take pride in their respective ethnic or religious cultures and they no longer no longer look at their own community uncritically nor do they view it as a monolithic entity. Individuals in this cluster often discussed the prejudices the Indian community has towards other minority groups, particularly Blacks, and how many in their own communities are "trying to be White." All are involved in ethnic or ethnoreligious organizations as adults.

This group includes people who – with just two exceptions, Saleena and Shabnam – had "encounter" experiences at some point in their life. Parth had an encounter experience while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi. Because he looked Indian, many Malawis asked him questions about India or made references to Indian popular culture. Living outside of the United States in neither India nor the United States provided him a sort of "neutral ground" on which he could think about his identity

independent of the different cultural pressures that research participants faced when in the U.S. or in India. As a result, Parth asked if he could give two Card Rating responses for all ten categories during adulthood — one to reflect his identity before serving in Malawi, and the second to reflect his identity since his experiences there.

I believe the degree of multidimensionality is related to the type (intensity) of the encounter. For example: Avya is the only person in the entire study to identify as "Asian American" during K-12. Identity is siuational for Avya as it also is for several other research participants. Avya's Asian American identity is a direct result of several "encounters" that Avya had regarding race and discriminatory experiences around race and religion. (As noted at pages 210-211, above, the Aryan Nation was recruiting at her high school, and her car was vandalized when she wrote an anti-racist editorial.)

Although I am not providing an analysis of the **"unknown" category,** I will comment on one member of that group: Deepali. The reader will note that I placed Deepali in a separate table (Table 8.6, above) to demonstrate that I believe Deepali represents a trajectory of Indian American ethnic identity development: an identity shift from ethnic orientation to a dominant orientation. Her ethnic self-identifier can indicates a shift over time of less and less attachment to ethnic culture – which is confirmed by the qualitative data. Deepali's profile, in the next section, will shed more light on the thoughts and experiences of this group. I chose to profile Deepali because although she is not "clustered" (because there no other research participants exhibit a similar trajectory), I believe she represents a larger segment of the second-generation Indian American community than is indicated by the experiences of the 41 participants in this study.

Profiles

In the four profiles that follow, I show how each of the four individuals identified during the three life periods and explore in some depth the factors that were most salient for these four. Superimposing upon these labels the quantitative data on factor salience gathered via the card-rating system, I map out the multiple trajectories of identity development. But the quantitative is merely a guide, a jumping-off point for identification and discussion of major themes. For organizational purposes I will use the lens of religion to present the four case studies. Religion is a high salient factor at one or more of the life periods of all four case study research participants. The lens of religion does not exclude other factors, but merely highlights the experiences concerning religion. By this example, I will show not only that ethnic identity development takes multiple trajectories, but also that the meaning associated with the identity labels differ from participant to participant.

Each profile begins with a chart presenting the card-rating categories to which the research participant ascribed a salient rating of three, four, or five. In addition, I included factors that research participants identified as having a negative role in their lives (e.g., -1). The qualitative data support this approach; research participants who assigned any negative number to a particular pre-determined factor discussed experiences relating to that factor, often at length. See Appendix J for the Card Rating data for all four participants being profiled.

Theorists such as Sue and Sue (1971) believe that individuals of Asian descent may fall into one of three categories: traditionalists, marginal, and Asian-American. I prefer the term *orientation* to *category*, a semiotic choice reflecting the evolving, Self-

selected and non-static nature of ethnic identity. As the qualitative and quantitative data in this study amply demonstrate, identity is always changing. By substituting the concept of orientation for that of "categories," I am also able to give more meaning and relevance to the idea that Indian American ethnic identity development is a trajectory rather than an endpoint – a process, not a product. (This can be said even as we reject the idea that moving along a trajectory is necessarily "progress," i.e. something positive or an "improvement.")

Even what the reader sees here is a snapshot. The story is not over yet; the research participants' lives are in constant flux. In the year since these data were gathered, the participants have moved along their trajectories; some have married or had children, others have experienced a critical incident(s). Their ethnic identity development process may by now have taken a different trajectory.

The profiles appear in the following order starting on the next page: Deepali, Binu, Suhas and Farzad.

Table 8.7. Deepali's Responses to the Card-Rating inquiry.

Category	K-12	College	Adulthood
Culture	4	2	2
Race	2	1	1
Religion	2	1	3
Trips to India	2	n/a	n/a
Family	4	4	4
Community	4	1	1
Language	1	1	1
Regional	2	2	2
Self-Identifier	Indian	Indian American	My parents emigrated from India, but I was born and raised here.

Deepali, a female Hindu, grew up in two different medium-sized integrated cities in the South with similar demographics. Deepali lived in racially diverse semi-urban areas, but went to schools that were predominantly White; she attended a public school up to and including sixth grade and a secular private school for grades seven through 12. Throughout the K-12 life period, she was involved with the local Indian community on weekends. She attended two different private universities for her undergraduate studies and is now a law student.

During high school Deepali identified as "Indian." She rated family, culture and community each as a "4." Her parents belonged to an Indian association and she always knew a lot of the other Indian American youth. Though few of them went to school with her, she "didn't feel like the only Indian kid in the city." Having friends through the association meant that even when Deepali was the only Indian in her class at school, she didn't feel alone or isolated because of it.

K-12

During the K-12 years Deepali identified as "Indian." She reported not "feeling a connection to being Indian" except that she knows people will label her as such. Deepali explicitly noted numerous reasons why she was not "really Indian." She mentioned having some Indian friends, learning to cook the food, hearing from family in India, "but as far as something deeper, like a religious connection, I've never really had that. And I can barely understand Punjabi [her family language]." All of her relatives in India except for a couple cousins only spoke Punjabi, so when she traveled to India she couldn't communicate with many people; since age twelve, she has never returned to India.

Deepali said she never wished that she was not Indian. Although she mentioned a few occasions when she was teased for her Indianness and briefly thought she wanted to be White, she stated clearly that she never "wished [she] had blonde hair like a Barbie."

> There's this White ideal of beauty and you play with White dolls and you want to have paler skin, but I never like felt like any of that, and I never even regretted being as tan as I was or want[ed] to be lighter.

Deepali *was,* however, affected by "Indian beauty ideals" and she felt pressure from the Indian American community to conform to certain beauty standards.

> When I was little, like there was a lot of pressure to have straight hair, but that was oddly all internal to the Indian community because you know when like you watch the Indian movies, the women all have uniform, stick-straight hair.... like I remember when I was younger, I felt sort of bad. It was like, oh, I wish I had straighter hair like my sister or my mom, and I'd – but that was all like internal to the family, not necessarily outside from the White community.

College

Deepali identified as "Indian American" in college. The Card Rating data reveals that Deepali rated her family as a "4" again during college, but she did not talk about

family much during her interview. Deepali explained one of the reasons for the shift in her identity – from "Indian" to "Indian American" – was to differentiate herself from the Indian students from India. There were many international students at her university that "if I said 'Indian' people would think I was one of *them*."

College was "the first time I felt somewhat self-conscious about it [being Indian]," Deepali remarked. She said she felt a lot of pressure to do the Indian American association events, but that she "resisted" that kind of "grouping by skin color or race." Deepali was clear that some reasons to get together are "good" and others are not; she felt religion was a good reason to gather as a group, but that culture was not. Feeling no cultural connection to the Indian American association, she preferred not to attend. She considers a religious identity a more credible identity than a cultural one, although she admits that she "probably still wouldn't have gone" to the events even if they were religiously-based.

> To say you're a part of culture means a fundamental commitment; means you seriously take the beliefs about culture seriously, and follow the religion and actually live it, not just go to cultural fairs or wear the clothes or cook the food.... I wasn't Hindu... I probably still wouldn't have gone, but I think what really made me resist was the idea of there's some sort of pressure or some sort of group identity aspect and I just didn't like the tone of it ... I probably wouldn't have gone 'cause I just sort of felt like if I'm not Hindu, I really don't have the connection, so, and there's no legitimate reason to get together based on group.

In remarking that the "wasn't Hindu," Deepali expressed a sentiment that she clarified more in discussing her adult identity: that she was "born Hindu" but does not consider herself at all religious.

Deepali's academic coursework had a big impact on her thinking about culture and religion. Majoring in economics, she came to define herself – and, indeed, to think

about concepts of identity – in terms of individual achievements: "It's all about your own accomplishments and your own thoughts; other people don't have that much to do with it." Being an "individualist" she sees as separating her from Indian culture, something she sees a more "collectivist":

> I've just always sort of had the idea which [has] carried over into college and law school… that, as an individual, you're not defined by background or region, like Southern or Northern, or like Indian or American, or things like that, but the ideas you chose to adopt and the belief system you chose, or the one that you're raised with and things like that.

Starting from this "individualistic" schema, Deepali identifies herself as a "western" thinker – drawing what seemed to her like another line between her personal identity and the culture of her birth: "As far as a commitment to a mode of thought, I've been much more western than eastern, much more American than Indian in that regard."

During college and since, Deepali says what matters most about any individual is his or her ideas. Other traits are unimportant by comparison:

> And you don't evaluate the way it was said [a paper], you evaluate the substance…I just thought that was such a wonderful not looking at gender or race or even presentation, but were so looking for the substance of what someone said.

In college, Deepali thought it would be beneficial for her to take classes to learn more about India and "Indian things." An Indian philosophy course solidified her self-image as a western thinker and that she didn't feel a connection to Indian thinking. Rationality outside of religion is "a hallmark of western civilization," one with which Deepali identified herself very strongly. She consistently spoke of western thought as "we," and tended to leave culture/tradition behind and be moved by mere force of ideas.

Adulthood

Today Deepali identifies herself by saying, "my parents emigrated from India but I was born and raised here." The factors most salient for her today are family (4) and religion (3), yet again she never talks about family.[55]

She has an absolutist approach to religion, feeling it is better to take all or nothing than to adopt bits and pieces to suit one's conveniences, hopes and fears. As "a real individualist," she chooses to be non-practicing but identifies as Hindu, because she does believe in God.

> I believe in God. I don't practice any religion because I wasn't really raised with one. I also don't like the sort of weird pattern of people our age mixing and matching religions to their own convenience, which I'm somewhat guilty of 'cause I'm not following any established religion, so, which I feel very bad about, but I don't like the idea of like, well, I find it convenient to believe in reincarnation because I think that's fun so I'm going to take a little bit of that, and I think I don't like to believe in a wrathful God, so I'm not going to believe in that, but I like to believe in this, and I like to believe in heaven, so I'm going to believe in that. Religion is not something convenient – like it's not like Santa Claus, it's not convenient to make you feel good through the day…I believe in God, I do believe in God, but I haven't committed to any religion.

Deepali continues to put a premium on the idea that as an individual one is/should be defined not by background – the ideas and modes of thought "you're raised with – but instead by "the ideas you adopt and the belief system you chose." In this respect, she very much did her own thing.

> I mean, part of it's probably being raised in America where if you have a more traditional education, I mean, that, that is sort of what the American value system is, like what the government is founded on, a very individualistic conception. I guess when I learned it as a kid, I took it somewhat seriously and I just sort of ran with it.

Deepali describes her ethnicity as not "an issue" for her day-to-day, but takes notice of her ethnicity when people bring it up. On this topic, she discussed several experiences around some of her extra-curricular involvements as well as her process of finding a job. She is the president of her school's chapter of the Federalist Society, a politically conservative group of lawyers and law students. She is the only minority in the organization and is surprised by the number of people who comment about her being a women of color present and active in a "conservative" organization.

> I'm president of it this year, so I go to all the events, obviously… I actually don't feel self-conscious about it there at all or I don't really notice it, I mean, even though I'll usually be the only minority woman…but I sort of feel like conservative students here are pointed out to me sometimes – it sort of takes me by surprise 'cause I really don't think of it that way.

She also shared some of the comments made to her by classmates regarding some of the offers for at particular law firms.

> There's been comments…like there have been conservatives and liberals who say it, it's different for you to get like law firm job offer because you're a minority woman or it's different for you, like you have the advantage of being a minority woman when you applied for your clerkship or whatever… I oppose Affirmative Action… [And although] we have this bad program out there, that doesn't excuse you being a moron. Like, it's just a very stupid reaction, like even if you feel some people don't deserve to be in 'X' place because of Affirmative Action doesn't mean everyone is there because of it, and I feel like it's rather an ignorant way to live life to let other people to, to make – you know, like to react to a bad program by becoming even more ignorant and stupid.

Deepali believes Affirmative Action is not needed. She "got everything [she] wanted" – that is, she got into the colleges, law school and law firm of her choice. She talked about her father and how he thought he might have been discriminated against and denied a promotion because he was Indian. Her father, a physician on a medical school

faculty reported facing discrimination for being Indian at his workplace. Deepali's response was, "I was just like, 'you really don't believe that, [do you?]'" She felt her father was exaggerating the situation at work because "if you looked at the staff at [the university hospital] there were so many Asians who were heads of the department anyway that I don't think it was a direct result." She questioned her father's perception of discrimination while also stating

> I guess I wouldn't have any way of knowing. I mean, how can you tell? Like, I got into every college I applied [to]. I got into every law school. I got the firm job I wanted, so as far as any sort of indication [of discrimination, there has been] none that I really know of.

Analysis and Discussion

Deepali is the only research participant who showed an identity shift from and ethnic orientation to a dominant orientation. When self-identifying during all three life periods, her claim to ethnicity was often a result of the identity society ascribed to her (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). During her K-12 years, her ethnic identification label is a product of the major socialization influences of parents and community (Barth, 1961, (Stephan & Stephan, 2000)or what Marcia (1981) would refer to as "foreclosed identity." For Deepali, Indian — specifically Punjabi — food was her main connection to Indian culture (Mannur, 2000). Lopez (1997) identifies religion and language to be critical components of ethnic identity, Waters (1990) stresses language to be the salient factor in ethnic identity. Based on the work of these scholars, Deepali's of ethnic attachment is easily understood. She had no sense of ethnic attachment because of her "low" Hindi and Punjabi skills and because she felt no connection to Hinduism. In terms of language, Deepali's level of Punjabi also limits communication with her relatives in India, which as

scholars have indicated renders her unable to understand many of the nuances of Indian culture (Dicker, 1996; Heller, 1987; Sridhar, 1988). From an early age, Deepali does not identify with Hinduism as a belief system, because she does not understand it. Deepali's reaction is similar to Fenton (1988), Leonard (1997) and Kurien (1998) reporting the second generation lack of understanding of religious beliefs and rituals is related to seeing rituals performed without much explanation. Igoa (2000) argues how the lack of understanding of religious beliefs and rituals, specifically those who are not of the dominant Christian faiths, affects the children of immigrants. For Deepali religion is a more legitimate basis for social grouping and group-formation (*Cf.* Weber, 1958; Mcguire, 1994) than is culture. Deepali perceives religion as a more authentic basis for group identity than ethnic culture; this belief is similar to the responses of second-generation Indian Americans in Maira's (1998) study. For Deepali, the rituals and traditions associated with Hinduism that her parents perform and uphold is perceived as "the way" to be Hindu. Since she did not follow the traditions in that particular way, she sees herself as not religious (Peeradina, 1996; Radhakrishnan, 1994).

Deepali's self-ascriptive label of "Indian American" during college shows her efforts to separate herself from international students — those her own age who were actually born and raised in India. Having an American facet to her identity, even as she realized that she was "seen" as Indian, was important to her. Indeed, she specifically mentions using the different label so that she would not be "misidentified." Note that this is also way for her to distance herself from her ethnic background.

Growing up in a White community, Deepali became accustomed to downplaying in her own mind the fact that she was racially, ethnically and religiously different from

her peers. In college, the sudden size and visibility of her Indian community made her self-conscious because in her mind, hanging out together as "a group of Hindus… because of color" drew attention to a distinction she had been accustomed to downplaying to others and in her own mind (Tatum, 1997).

As a result of her academic course work, Deepali realized that she was "more comfortable with Western thought and Eastern thought." She had grown this way in part by absorbing the dominant ideology that privileges western thought, monotheism over eastern thought. During the interview, she praised the western economists and philosophers whose teachings strongly reinforced her early ideas of "doing your own things." In college, one of her most salient identities was that of an "individualist." She associates being an "individual" with being "American." In Deepali's mind, being "individualistic" separates her from Indian culture, something she sees a more "collectivist." Starting from this "individualistic" schema, Deepali identifies herself as a "western" thinker – drawing what seemed to her like another line between her personal identity and the culture of her birth: "As far as a commitment to a mode of thought, I've been much more western than eastern, much more American than Indian in that regard." She has accepted the dominant ideology of White-man's America and believes that Indian thought and Hinduism are inferior (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997).

Her shift from an ethnic orientation towards a dominant orientation continues into adulthood and is present today. Deepali's identity changed during this life period not only because "Indian" now means "from India," indicating a shift in orientation away from ethnic cultural attachment ("Indian culture"). She rejects the notion of an Indian

community. In Deepali's world view during college and today, what matters most about any individual is his or her ideas.

Her individualist ideas are exhibited by her behavior with her role as the president of the Federalist Society. She holds in high esteem those individuals who "see people for their ideas" and not "for" other things such as gender, culture, and race. Since she experienced no discrimination and has gotten everything she has wanted in terms of academics and career, she questions other's experiences of discrimination. She exhibits what could be considered a "classic case" of someone at the acceptance stage in the Hardiman and Jackson's Social Identity Development model (1997). Having neither experienced racial or religious oppression first hand she does not see the systemic nature of oppression, which is clearly evident in her anti-Affirmative Action stance. She is one of the "fervent proponents of racism as the colorblind" (Prashad, 2001, p.24).

Deepali characterizes all her negative race-based experiences as somehow *not* the product of racism or racial/ethnic animus. Her overall notion: All things "American" (read White) are good. The one time Deepali felt a desire to look or "be" different — when she wished she had straighter hair and fairer skin — she blamed that not on the dominant American culture but on Indian culture's fixation on skin tone and straight hair, as expressed in Hindi movies and by her own family.

Deepali's increasing detachment from Indian culture combined with her academics resulted in self perception as a "western," "individualist" thinker, Deepali shifted from an ethnic to a dominant orientation.

Table 8.8. Binu's Responses to the Card-Rating inquiry.

Category	K-12	College	Adulthood
Culture	5	5	5
Race	5	5	5
Religion	5	5	5
Trips to India	5	5	5
Family	5	5	5
Community	5	5	5
Language	5	5	4
Regional	5	5	4
Self-Identifier	Indian	Indian	Indian

Binu, a Catholic female, has lived in the same metropolitan area her entire life with the exception of one year of graduate school. Her parents arrived in the U.S. in 1973, before she was born. Binu, along with one other research participant, is the only research participant whose family immigrated to the U.S. because the mother arrived first and later sponsored her husband and family. Binu's mother was part of the large number of nurses hired from India and other countries. She has one brother. She and her family have been very involved with the Malayali Catholic community in her town. She attended a parochial school, where all students had to be Catholic, for all of her K-12 schooling. She attended a predominantly black women's college for two years, then transferred to an urban commuter school. In her last two years of high school and in college she interacted mostly with "North Indian" friends. Growing up, she went to Mass every Sunday at a Malayali Catholic church. In college, she attended Mass at the same Malayali Church about once a month. She described growing up in a predominantly White environment both in school and in her neighborhood. For graduate school, she left her town. She described this stage of her life as difficult because of the lack of racial and

ethnic diversity in the town where her graduate school was located. Today she works for the Blue Cross/Blue Shield insurance company.

Binu grew up identifying very strongly with being Malyali (an Indian regional identity); she spoke the language at home and traveled almost yearly "back to Kerala." She also identified very strongly with being a Catholic, a Malyali Catholic.

K-12

The qualitative data are not very revealing in terms of determining which of the pre-determined factors was the most salient for Binu. She is unique in providing almost all "5's" in response to the card-rating inquiry. Accordingly, a discussion of "most" and "least" salient factors for Binu requires us to draw heavily from her narrative. This narrative indicates that during Binu's K-12 years ethnic culture, religion, and her ethnoreligious community – that is, her Malayali Catholic community — were interrelated and were the most salient identity factors.

Binu identified as "Indian" during the K-12 period. She said she didn't "*feel* different" from her classmates, but also recalled *noticing* differences between herself and her classmates. She reported having both African American and "Caucasian" friends at school, adding that she never felt "shunned or anything" but that she became "aware of different-ness from my Caucasian friends" in the third and forth grade. She was very surprised when her classmates asked her questions about India, *saris* and *bindis*: "That made me realize… I always thought everyone knew about that kind of stuff… I just assumed everyone knew." There was only one time, in fifth grade, she was taunted by classmates because of her ethnic differences: "At one point with their curiosity and

everything, they would make fun of Indian women, like they would say 'why don't you wear your *bindi,'* or something."

Her main connection to Indian culture during the K-12 life period was through her trips to India; food; and her family, both here and in India. She was one of the few who talked about her pride in Indian culture when she was talking about her K-12 associations.

> I have always been close my Indian heritage. I have been going back to India every two years. So I have been back a lot. The language is spoken at home, Malayalam. I have always been closed my culture and traditions, even as far as the foods I eat. And we are a very close-knit family. So I think all of that has led me to be Indian and to say proudly that I am Indian. I have never wanted to deny being Indian. Even during those fourth and fifth grade periods when people were making fun of me and things, I never, never denied it.

Although she was proud to be Indian, there were times she had conflicts with parents and wished she was not Indian because her parents would not let her go spend the night at the home of some of her friends.

> Like a lot of my friends would invite me over for "spend-the-nights" and I was never allowed to go. Like even in seventh or eighth grade, I was not always allowed to go to the malls with my friends. I could spend the night at my Malayali friends' houses. (I did not have any north Indian friends at the time.)… That was not a problem. But it was not allowed at my American friends' houses.

Binu had a counselor at her high school in whom she confided about these family disputes. Through this "extremely close bond," Binu had an in-school outlet for her frustrations about "not being able to go to homecoming or not being able to go out… or go to parties." She also had opportunities to express herself culturally at school:

> There were a group of us [four Malayali Catholics] we were always trying to promote Indian things. And so in high school we had an India day for two years in a row. We brought food and I did a dance at school.

Although Binu did not experience any discrimination, she was aware of it because her parents had. She was one of the few research participants whose parents talked to them about the discrimination they faced at work.

> I think my parents did [face discrimination] because of their accents. I think they both have in that manner. I remember my mom telling me stories about the workplace. She would tell me that they assumed she would be doing more work than other people. And with my father same kind of thing… They would ask me if anything like that had ever happened in school.

Because she attended a school where everyone was Catholic and her ethnoreligious community was Catholic, it was not until she got to college that Binu realized she was different from most other Indians in terms of the interaction of her religion and her ethnicity.

College

In college, although Binu identified as "Indian," she quickly reported that it depended on who asked the question and what they were asking. It was in college that she "realized that being Catholic and being Indian is very different." Although she had started to hang formed friendships with North Indians during her last few years of high school, College was the first time that Binu spent time with non-Catholic, specifically she immersed herself in a non-Catholic "North Indian" community instead of the Malayali (Catholic) community.

> Being Catholic I never had a problem, I mean I knew there were other Indians, Hindus and Muslims, it never really hit me until college, because I had always been in a Catholic atmosphere up until that point. So as a freshman in college, my roommate was a Muslim girl and that was the first time that it really hit me, like oh my goodness people are really shocked when they hear that I am Christian. They just have never comprehend the fact that there are Indians who are Christian. We had

> numerous discussions… I had been so close to someone who was not Catholic. Like all my friends are Catholics, even the ones who are from Kerala. At school it was 100% Catholic… And so that was very different. It was really me getting used to the fact that I was Christian. I mean I always wear a cross and Indian people would always ask me why I am wearing a cross.

In the first couple of year of college she enjoyed being asked questions about being Indian and Catholic. "I loved it! I don't get offended… especially because I think there are so many ignorant people, American and Indians. I would just explain the whole history of St. Thomas coming to Kerala and to Goa and the Portuguese." Although being asked questions is one thing, being made to feel that perhaps she is "less Indian" or more Caucasian is different.

> [Late in college] is when I realized that being Catholic and being Indian is very different. I knew it was rare, but I guess I did not think that people thought it was really weird. Like my Hindu friends, the way their questioning was to me, not like in a maddening tone, but like the Christians came, the missionaries came and forcibly converted, and automatically turned Christian. None of my friends blamed me, but that was the feeling I got. I mean that is when I realized that is what the world thinks, that is what a lot of Indian people think. This is the feeling out there. But I would just go into my history thing and explain that this is not the way it happened. I mean I understand that that is a way a lot of Christianity was spread. But I truly believe that was just, I mean I know my forefathers were Hindu, I mean I know that is where my family comes from, but for as long we know, my family has just been Christian.

As an undergraduate, Binu spent most of her time with second-generation Indian Americans who were not Catholic. "Most of my friends were Hindu or Muslim. I attended the Hindu functions, the *Diwali* and *Holis*. I did not have any Catholic friends at the time. I was not involved with Catholic things." Although Binu was not involved with Catholic events or groups on campus, she continued to attend mass every Sunday. For her being religious meant having "close communication with God." The third

Sunday of every month she went to Mass at the Malyali Catholic Church with her parents every third Sunday. She enjoys attending Mass with her parents and because the service is conducted in Malayalam just like it is in Kerala.[56]

> I don't understand everything there, because it is the very high Malayalam they use in the church, but if they don't go too fast, I can get bits and pieces. I would still go. I thought it was very good because the church was done exactly how it is in Kerala.

She described having the same amount of religiosity in college as she did in high school saying that it was easier in high school because she was in a Catholic atmosphere to practice. She said that although she was knowledgeable about her religion all while growing up having attended a parochial school, she believes that her level of knowledge increased in college because that is when she had to use it.

> It started associating with other people who were not Catholic…and then I found that I was pulling stuff that I had learned… it was amazing. I actually then started being more aware of my Catholic, or Christianity, you know, and – because I was having to explain it.

Towards her junior and senior year of college, she said "I had been into the Indian scene, until my junior year and then I got back into my Malayali heritage." Here she distinguishes between regional and ethnic identity. For her being Malayali is her ethnic identity.

> Everything comes back to junior year…because then I was having to explain my practices, or I was having to explain parts of my mass, or I was having to explain the reasons for communion or, or whatnot because my Indian friends would ask me. But all, up until that point, I, it was just something that was always done. I understood, of course, but I, I had never had to tell other people about it, so, I think.

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[56] Kerala is a state in southern India.

Adulthood

The changes reflected from her card rating data between college and adulthood are a decrease from "5" to "4" in the importance of her regional identity and language – which are interrelated. In adulthood she identifies as "Indian" and this identity continues to be situational.

> When the question is asked of me…, if they say, "what are you?", I'll say I'm Indian... If they say, "where are you from?", I'll say I was born in Atlanta and then they'll, then their later question will be, "Where are you *originally* from?"

For graduate school she left her town and spent a year in a "predominantly Caucasian town." She felt different most of the time. " I mean, you would walk into a Wal-Mart [and] you could just instantly tell because there was just Caucasian mountain people… Nobody said anything to me, of course, but you could just tell that kind of thing." Although feeling different became part of her life for that one year, she said that she did not experience any discrimination.

> I don't know if I was self-conscious about it because I was an Indian person or… a colored… somebody different than a Caucasian walking into a place. I think I was self-conscious at that point... but I don't think anything that awful.

During this year she felt isolated religiously. She described this town as having only two Catholic churches, neither of which she felt comfortable at so associate with other Catholic students on campus. "I joined the Catholic community [on campus]. They a very small Catholic community and they had mass in the basement of a house, which I went religiously, every Sunday."

One of the things she about very strongly are her reactions to the people she meets who have so many misconceptions about India and the traditions and cultures.

> If anybody says anything about Indians and if they have a misconception or any type of wrong perception of whatever it may be, arranged marriages are a very typical example, or poor, or poverty in India, I mean, obviously it's developing country, but I will also say that, you know, India is a very intelligent country – I would always stick up, all my life, I'd never, I'd never say anything bad about it. I've never lied about it, I've just given them another side, regardless of what my opinions may be because I, I really think there's a lot of ignorance out there.

For Binu today, "Indian culture is being involved in the community, whether it be myself in the Indian community or whether it be the, you know, my North Indian community… to be involved in these functions that go on in our community." She feels that her community will play a vital role in the transmission of "Catholic processes and most definitely Malayali traditions and cultures" to her children. She wants to send her children to India and "try to keep the language in the house."

Binu continues today to struggle with an issue she first encountered in college with regards to her Catholic identity and being Indian. "I think I felt that Indians perceived Catholicism as a Caucasian religion and so they saw us as a Caucasian type of family or people, and I think I had massive problems with that."

Analysis and Discussion

Binu's identity profile is an exemplar of Cluster I, those who identified in the same way across the lifespan. Like 15 of the 19 people in this group, Binu identified as "Indian" in all three periods. For her, this identity was situational; depending on the situation (context), she would self-identify in different ways. She described using a number of different situational ethnicities (Root, 2000) — e.g., "well, when I'm with other Indians, I'll say 'Malayali' or 'Malayali Catholic'" — in all three life periods. Binu's ethnoreligious community, Malayali Catholic, has played a big role in her life and

serves as her reference group. Binu's combination of situational ethnic identity as an "Indian" and a Malayali reference group orientation are emblematic of those many research participants who have another social identity that is equal to or more relevant that ethnicity for them; which scholars (Cross, 2001; Root, 2000) have shown to be the case for African Americans and Mixed race individuals.

Because her ethnoreligious community during the K-12 years was Malayali Catholic, Binu experienced no cognitive dissonance over being Malayali Catholic and Indian. After being marginalized during college, however, she grow to understand and even to adopt for herself the distinction made by others: Her "Indian" ethnic identity filters out from her Malayali.

Binu experienced many of the conflicts with parents and culture that other research participants described (See Chapter 5). What distinguishes her experience from many others in the study is the welcoming of her ethnic cultural identity by her peers, teachers and administrators in the school environment. Binu had an administrator in the school who listened and affirmed her feelings.[57] She was encouraged in high school — at both in-school and extracurricular events — to talk about her struggles. This validation of an individual's ethnic/cultural identity by school teachers, administrators and students results in pride of one's culture and heritage (Olsen, 1997, Igoa, 1999).

During college, Binu's religious identity became more salient than it had been during her K-12 years because she found herself immersed in a non-Catholic, "North Indian" community of peers instead of the Malayali community. This change in social

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[57] Unlike the two other Catholic participants, who also attended parochial school and then associated with a predominantly Hindu Indian American community, Binu's ethnoreligious community was a Malayali community.

context proved to be a critical incident in terms of Binu's socialization process. The increased interaction with second generation Indian American who were Hindu and Muslim resulted in Binu's heightened awareness of how she was perceived as an other; she had never perceived herself as such before. Her identity was re-constructed when she was perceived as different by other second generation Indian Americans. (Hall, 1987; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Hurtado et al., 1997).

Because religion (specifically, Hinduism) is tied up with national identity in India, the massive influx of Indian immigrants after 1965 has led not only to the Indian American population establishing a community, but also to that community's having the ethos, generally speaking, of India's dominant Hindu milieu (Leonard, 2000; Radhakrishnan, 1994). This notion of "culture," heavy with Hinduism, has been transmitted to the second generation and the effects of this conflated Indian American/Hindu identity can be seen in the experiences described by Binu. She initially enjoyed the questioning from second-generation Indian Americans who are not Christian or Catholic, but she became upset once she realized as a result of the questioning that she was seen as somehow less Indian, less authentic, because she was Catholic – which was seen as a "White" religion.

In Binu's eyes, she was Indian and her Hindu/Muslim peers were Indian. But in the eyes of those peers, they were "real Indians" and she was not. Over time she also became upset with the fact that her "North Indian" friends and acquaintances saw Catholicism as a "Caucasian religion." Her identity as a Malayali Catholic became the most psychologically important identity. This increase in the importance of Binu's identity as a Malayali Catholic during her college years is similar to the research subjects

in Hurtado's study (1997), where a social identity becomes more salient a result of the negative experiences associated with that specific social identity.

Like virtually all the participants in this group, Binu views religion as static and unchanging — one of the reasons many second-generation individuals see religion as a more legitimate form of ethnic expression. In reality, religion, like culture, is dynamic — particularly in immigrant community when traditions and rituals are constantly being reconfigured (Williams, 1998; George, 2000). Attending Mass at her Malayali Catholic Church is sees as "doing it the right was, because that is what is done in Kerala." The Malayali Catholic community plays a large role in Binu's live event today. She believes community is critical for her to be able to transmit the rituals, traditions, and language to her children.

For Binu, returning to her ethnoreligious community after college meant coming back to the core of what makes her Indian. She separates Indian culture from Hinduism; throughout the interview, she separated descriptions and remarks about "Malyali Catholic" culture from those about "North Indian, " (i.e. the "Indian" most research participants understood as "Indian") culture.

The main reason to presenting Binu's experience as exemplar of Cluster I is that it shows that one may identify as "Indian" across the life span, but what that *means* changes, losing some meanings and taking on new ones. For Binu, her religious identity, her ethnoreligious community and the social context in which these exist are crucial influences on the process of ethnic identity development.

Table 8.9. Suhas' Responses to the Card-Rating inquiry.

Category	K-12	College	Adulthood
Culture	-2	5	5
Race	-4	5	5
Religion	-2	3	5
Trips to India	3	n/a	n/a
Family	2	4	5
Community	1	4	2
Language	1	1	1
Regional	1	1	-2
Self-Identifier	Identified more with weing White	Indian	Indian

Suhas, a male Hindu, lived his entire life (until moving as an adult) in or near a small, rural town with his parents and two sisters. He described his hometown as "very Christian." He traveled to India twice during his K-12 years and has not returned to India since. Suhas reported his family being active in the local Indian American community. He attended public schools for all of his schooling, including attending a public university for undergraduate and medical school. Today he is married and is in private practice as a cardiologist.

K-12

Suhas developed race awareness after an experience in third grade when he felt marginalized. This experience, which left an indelible impression on him, caused him to become aware not only of the fact that people notice racial difference, but also that racially he was seen as a "neither" – not just different, but racially ambiguous.

> I remember clearly there was a time in third grade where they were doing a survey. I'm not sure exactly what it was for, but they wanted to make sure that they had accounted for all the racial percentages in the classroom. So what they did was they asked everyone to stand up if they were White and they counted the number of heads, and then they asked

> everybody who was Black to stand and they counted the number of heads, and that was it. And I never stood up, so I raised my hand and I said, "Well, when am I supposed to stand up?" And the teacher looked at me and she scratched her head, and she goes, "I don't know," and she said, "I guess I'll just put you down with Blacks." And that was the first time I ever realized there was – I think it's the first time it dawned upon me that people took note of racial differences. I mean, I had noticed things, but, you know, when you're that young, everybody is sort of your friend or some – you don't really recognize it being a difference. And it was the first time I ever think that someone that counted for there being an important to make a distinction between White and Black and others.

This was the first time that Suhas recalled feeling different from everyone else around him, but it would not be the last during his K-12 life period.

Religion also had a salience ("-2") in Suhas' life during the K-12 period. He discussed numerous incidents in school and his neighborhood – which he described as "very Christian" – when he felt different because of his religious beliefs and practices. "[The fact] that we don't believe in Christ that made me stand out," Suhas said. His classmates asked him " why [he] prayed to cows" and taunted him for being "reincarnated from a dog." He described in vivid detail, and with no small amount of residual anger, his experience of being kicked out of the National Honor Society for failing to fulfill the "attendance requirement."

> I got kicked out of the National Honor Society because once a month on a Sunday they went to different churches so that you could have a diversity of experience with different religions. That was the purpose behind it… I told them that we should go to one of the Hindu services, and they [his fellow students and the club's advisor, a teacher] said no, said no, we're not going to do that.

After having his religious identity rejected, Suhas no longer wanted to go to the Church services:

> I was like, "then I'm not going to these religious things."… They didn't say anything, but when I fell out of the participation because I didn't go to the religious things, they kicked me out of the Honor Society.

This discriminatory act had academic ramifications for Suhas, who felt out of place at his own high school graduation as a result:

> I was very, very mad because I was graduating in the top five in my class. Everybody around me had the Honor stole on except for me, and I was just upset because the only reason was 'cause I refused to go to church on one Sunday out of the month.

Despite his experiences in school, Suhas had a positive sense of his ethnic cultural and religious identity when in the company of his ethnoreligious community. He grew up with a formal and informal social network, attending the Hindu temple in his area, participating in the Indian American association, and spending time with other Indian Hindu families. He reported his main connection to Indian culture during his K-12 years was attending "Sunday School" and the Indian community's ethnoreligious functions and celebrations. He also mentioned a trip to India when he was sixteen years old as an important positive experience in his identity development process; the most memorable part of the trip for him was going to the temples and seeing people pray.

Even though he claimed pride in his culture, the messages he received in school meant only being proud of his culture when he was with his community. When he was "with other people" – at school or out in the community – he hid as many of the differences as he could. The only experience he had outside his home ethnoreligious community that made him feel it was "okay to be different" was a short-lived Summer

Honors Program, a residential program near his home where there were kids of various racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

> I think that was the first time I recognized the fact that I was different and it was okay to be different, and they really wanted you to recognize that your difference has made you a better person. And I think that was the time that I started identifying myself as not being White.

Returning to his school environment, however, Suhas returned to identifying "as White" and compartmentalizing aspects of his Indian identity.

> I would never tell anybody that I went to the temple. If I had to wear like Indian clothes, I'd make sure none of my friends would see me. If my mom was ever wearing a *sari* while we were out at the mall, I would like not hang out with my mother 'cause I was afraid that I would be seen with [her] by one of my [school] friends.

Suhas said that "maybe every other day" he wished that he was not Indian. Being Indian "was a source of difference, especially at that time, and I didn't understand it." He said he was embarrassed by his parents and "tried to be what my parents weren't." In high school all his friend were White. Being non-White and non-Christian was actually frustrating for Suhas:

> I just said, you know, I'm in the U.S., I was surrounded by all these White people who are Christian. Why, why me? Why am I the one that's so different? [I] couldn't explain it. And I was like, wouldn't life be easier if I weren't Indian. I thought that life would be easier if I were White.

Suhas equated – indeed, conflated – being Indian with being Hindu. Particularly since both were target identities, he used them interchangeably. Being Indian was tied, in his mind, to belonging a religion that made him different. He said that if he were White it would be easier for him "to be just like everyone else." He thought his life would be better if he did not have to deal with the social challenges he

associated with being Indian:

> It'd be easier for me to go out with the girl next door. It'd be easier for me not to have worry about who is going to make a funny comment about the way my mother and father talked or the way that my parents dressed or my religious beliefs or, or the fact that, you know, I looked different. People always came up to me and say, what are you, you know, because of the whole difference in skin.

Late adolescence was also a time of cognitive dissonance for Suhas on the subject of religion. At the beginning of his senior year of high school, he stopped going to Sunday School because he

> didn't buy the Hinduism [his] parents were telling [him]… I definitely did not buy the religion of my [community]… I tried to approach religion from an intellectual standpoint at that – and I just couldn't do it, so I considered myself agnostic.

He asked a lot of questions and was dissatisfied with the answers he got from his parents and other adults in his ethnoreligious community. As a result, he rejected the religion and its worldview.

College

In College, the three major factors that intertwined with such negative impacts in high school all shifted to a positive orientation for Suhas. Culture shifts from "-2" to "5," race from "-4" to "5," and religion from "-2" to "3."

While religion remained part of his identity during this life period, the collegiate Suhas drew a particularly stark distinction between religion and culture. In high school, religion had been something he "had to do." In college, his religious experiences occured in two ways, both of which were less intensely personal than his K-12 religious

experiences. Religion became (a) a matter of acquiring more knowledge about religion through academic coursework, and (b) a way to spend time with his mother.

Suhas' outlook on his identity changed only after his freshman year in college. Old habits die hard, and when he first got to college, Suhas said, "I saw an Indian person coming down the way, and I would be first one to make fun of the them." However,

> after seeing other people, being around Indians in classes and being around other Indians in social events and having other Indian friends, it made me realize that what I was going through in high school, I wasn't the only one. And it was refreshing to see that there were people out there that were somewhat like me, who had similar troubles that I did, and, and I think I started to identify proudly that I was Indian. I, I liked the way that we – I liked the fact that I was different. You know, all this time I had said I wanted to be an individual, I wanted to be different, but I still was uncomfortable with the fact that I was "Indian."

By the time he as a sophomore, he identified as "Indian" and was proud to be ethnically and religiously different. He took pride in his family (which rose to a salience of "4," from "2" in the K-12 period) and in the customs, cultural traditions and beliefs he was exposed to.

He took classes in identity-related subjects, and even where the courses didn't answer the questions he had, he was glad at least to have a place to ask questions and think about the answers.

> I really started taking as many classes as I could towards understanding myself, I think. I mean I took a South Asian, uh, geography course, I took a Religions of the World course, I took a Philosophy of Religion, I took several Religion and Philosophy classes, I took Ritualism in Primitive Cultures, and I, I really tried to explore differences in people.

When Suhas attended religious functions – which he did less frequently than before college -- he did so with his mother. Religious attendance became a way for him

to spend time with her. He said that he started college as more of an agnostic and by the time he graduated he "was very religious, but not sure of what God was. I believed that there was a God but I wasn't sure about the exact details." Somewhere along the way, he began to identify as a practicing Hindu.

> I mean, I think it gave me a better understanding of what life meant, and that life – to me, I still think that Hinduism, to me, is a way I lead life, and there's a way to lead your life. And it sort of helped give me that kind of direction. I believe in god, and I believe in, in a lot of what Hinduism approaches god– I don't think I'm in 100-percent concordance with the beliefs of everything in Hinduism. I can say that comfortably. I don't think I ever will believe every aspect of Hinduism…I still feel that I'm Hindu because I still think that the way I lead my life– or sort of described in the Hindu – sort of like a Hindu standpoint or point of view.

In college Suhas did not face any overt discrimination like he had during his K-12 years. He did, however, recount equivocal experiences — experiences that he felt (but wasn't sure) might have occurred because he was Indian. In essence, Suhas found himself experiencing more societal racism, a product of the attitudes of those around him, than individually-focused hate or discrimination.

> I mean, people would come and tell you "you're going to hell because you believe X, Y, and Z," or "you are this because of that." And I don't think I was discriminated against. I think that you were always challenged on your beliefs on a daily basis, and I think that a lot of that, not always was that just in, you know, your thoughts on political position, but I think it was also about your religious and ethnic background, as well, but I don't think I was discriminated against. I, yeah, I was not discriminated against in college… Even though you're now dealing with a more intellectual group of people, I think that you still have the same basic kind of beliefs in that group of people, and… there are people out there that I knew would never accept the fact that I was different. They would never accept the fact that I believed in something they didn't believe. They didn't accept the fact that I couldn't believe in what they believe. They couldn't accept the fact that I may dress differently or that my actions were different… *I think that*

> *people tolerated, this group tolerated you more, but I don't think acceptance was there. Tolerance perhaps, but not acceptance.*[58]

Adulthood

As an adult today, Suhas identifies as "Indian" and gives scores of "5" to Culture, Race and Religion and Family in the card data. But although he uses the same ascriptive identifier as he did in college, there are significant changes in his "Indian" identity today as compared to his collegiate "Indian" identity. The transformation in his identity is related to new developments in his understanding of Hinduism and what it means to him. He has a better understanding of the rituals but also continues to question the rationale behind certain aspects of rituals and traditions.

Understanding religion as such is very important to him. For him religion does not have a social component; it is more personal than social or cultural. His main reason for going to temples or religious events is personal belief; what had been a cultural or social exercise with co-ethnics and family has become a private act of expressing his faith. Although he attends such functions less frequently than when in college, he reports making a concerted effort to participate regularly. He and his wife have pujas at home. He associates going to the temple with the cultural aspect of Hinduism while religion for Suhas is daily reflection – thinking about his meaning in this world.

> We go to the temple, but I still think that I reflect on religion more on a daily basis, and to me that's sort of why, what Hinduism is about, so… We're very concerned about how much of this we'll we be able to pass on… to our children… We're much more aware of everything. Little things that we used to do without ever questioning, I now question and I ask for the reasons why we do certain rituals. I understand why we do certain rituals better than I had before. I'm still in that same way where I question everything. Um, my belief, I think is stronger in Hinduism,

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[58] Emphasis added.

> um, sort of in the long roundabout way, and I think it's more of an intellectual strength rather than a blind faith.

Today identifying as Indian is a great source of pride for Suhas. He feels that that where he used to see it as a hindrance a hindrance is now his strongest attribute.

> To me, it's sort of the background, the backbone and the background of my life. I now look to my Indian background, for my heritage and my culture and my religion were support, where I would never have even fathomed that in the past.

He continues to experience discrimination today as a physician.

> I've had a situation where I would go in and I'd save people's lives, and then afterwards they would request I wouldn't be their doctor just because of their, I guess, beliefs or their concerns. I think that's just funny. You know, I just think it's funny and, you know, and it's their preference. Fine. That's fine. I mean, that doesn't make me any less of a person, but, you know, that's just the reality of the world.

Suhas can also see societal and institutional racism. "I think a lot of racism I see isn't towards me. A lot of the racism I see is towards other people." His experiences of racial and religious discrimination in high school are his yardstick that he measures other experiences by. Because those experiences were so dramatic, little of what he has experienced since college seems "as bad as that." The adult Suhas is more self-assured, and is confident in his religious identity and his ethnic identity. When he does experience or witness racism, he does so with a firm grounding in his own identity rather than the uncertainty and shame that characterized his K-12 years.

> I don't think there's been a significant event [of racism during his adult life period]. I don't think events like that would be so dramatic as it would have been back… where it may have been altering in my life back in say high school or when I was growing up.

Being Hindu is a strong part of Suhas' ethnic identity. Indeed, his religious identity is not a separate identity – it is part of being Indian. Ethnic identity for him is based in his religious affiliation.

Analysis and Discussion

Suhas exemplifies Identity Cluster III. His identity shift over the lifespan shows an change from a dominant orientation to an ethnic orientation.

During the K-12 years, religion is the most salient identity for Suhas. Although the card rating data shows that Suhas rates Race "-4" and religion and culture "-2." For Suhas, racial and religious identity were two sides of the same coin. Both target identities were a source of pride and source of pain for him throughout his life. Suhas conflated his racial, ethnic and religious identities. Whichever social identity was being targeted at a given moment became the most salient for that moment (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Hoare, 1994; Hurtado et al., 1997). This conflation is not uncommon among research participants because for Suhas and others, religious identity is a target identity in much the same way that their racial and ethnic identities are.

Suhas' ethnic culture had a negative impact on his ethnic identity during his K-12 years. Although he was proud to be Indian, as Spring (2000) indicates, the psychological stress of being an outsider in his school environment and of being ridiculed by other children for being ethnically, culturally and religiously different often overpower the pride. Suhas hid his culture and traditions, expressing them only when he was with his Indian community. These psychological factors contributed to his acceptance of the idea that it was not "normal" to go the temple, that it was not "normal" to wear Indian clothes. This internalized oppression (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997) manifested itself through his

compartmentalized his identity in high school, and the unforgivingly thorough way he kept the home life separate from his school life. (Gibson, 1988; Igoa, 2000; Leonard, 1997; Olsen, 1997; Ooka Pang, 1992).

Throughout his K- 12 socialization, he received negative messages about his racial, ethnic and religious identity. However, he never received any messages (or was shown) that he could or do something about the discrimination. One of the prime examples is how he dealt with his expulsion from the National Honor Society. He never said anything to the advisor out of fear of retaliation. The advisor for National Honor Society was his English teacher. He also never mentioned anything to his parents, because earlier when he had relayed perceived discriminatory behavior towards him his parents had said, "'Don't worry about it too much.' They did not want to make a big deal out of it." He assumed they would have the same reaction to his expulsion from National Honor Society, so he never told him. On graduation day, his parents asked why he was not wearing his National Honor Society stole; he told them he'd lost it. His inability/unwillingness to take actions was a product of not having his parents' support, which is a factor influencing a child's reaction to prejudicial behavior (Ponteretto, 1994; Tatum, 1997).

Suhas' experiences of ethnic awareness preceded racial awareness, as did those of Kim's (1981) research subjects. As an elementary school student he still experienced feeling racially different; he learned that he was "an other." Although not fully realizing what that meant, he knew that he was different. Suhas' experiences is similar to the experiences of second generation and immigrant children. (Igoa, 2000; Lopez, 1997;

Ooka Pang, 1988; Ooka Pang, 1992; Takaki, 1994). This "otherness" shaped the lens through which he viewed his own culture and religion until he reached college.

Suhas had what could be described as two critical incidents that started the shift in his ethnic identity from and dominant orientation towards an ethnic orientation. The first — which critical incident — was when Suhas received affirmation for his differences being in diverse racial and ethnic environment at the summer honors program he attended after his junior year of high school which precipitated the shift from an dominant orientation to an ethnic orientation: "it was okay to be different… that was the time that I started identifying myself as not being White." Upon his returning to school, a predominantly White Christian environment, he continued to compartmentalize his identity.[59] He did not receive any information to counter the negative messages about his ethnic culture he was receiving in school.

During this same time period, Suhas experienced cognitive dissonance with respect to his home life. His questioning of Hinduism and dissatisfaction with the "answers" provided by his parents and community led him to identify as an agnostic by the end of high school. His experience at the Governor's Summer Honors Program was not necessarily an *encounter*, as Cross (1991) uses the term, but Suhas nevertheless ended up rejecting a part of his own identity: Hinduism and its worldview. He said he continued to identify "more White." It is clear that ecological factors, as well as a dearth of parental or social support, had an impact on his ethnic identity.

He began college still identifying more with being White, exhibiting internalized oppression. He reported that when in the company of his White friends, he

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[59] Suhas's experiences is similar to adolescents experiencing "internalized racism patterns" as described by Cross and Phagen Smith (2001).

would be the first to make fun of Indians — inflicting the pain himself so that he does not have to hear it from others.

Two elements contributed to Suhas' identity shift during his first and second year of college. The first element was the ecological context: the presence of other second-generation Indian American students and the support he gained from them as well as from the non-Indian Americans. Similar to the phenemoan experienced by African American children discussed by Tatum (1997) Suhas had a chance to "sit with all the Indian kids at the cafeteria," both literally and figuratively. Being with other second-generation Indian Americans for the first time not only provided Suhas support because there was a critical mass, but also enabled him to discover the range of experiences that people identified as "Indian." This was his second critical incident. The second element contributing to the identity shift was the opportunity to take classes on Hinduism and Indian culture. For the first time, he had multiple sources for information about elements of his own identity. His questions were not necessarily being answered but he had a place to and ask and think about the questions. By the time he was a sophomore, he identified as "Indian" and was proud to be ethnically and religiously different.

Suhas' collegiate "encounter" is not precipitated by a racist act – or by any act that negates a target identity. Rather, it is a result of a "positive" experience where his racial, ethnic and religious identity were affirmed. Lacking the "numbers" around him day-to-day was the major reason that the positive impact of his summer camp experience "did not last" in high school. Collegiate ecological factors, including the critical mass of Indian students *and* the acquisition of academic knowledge about his ethnic and religious background, were critical to Suhas' shift from a dominant orientation to an ethnic

orientation and to his developing a positive identity as an "Indian." It is towards the end of second year of college that his identity shifted. He identified as "Indian," and based on the qualitative data and quantitative data, race, religion and culture have become positive factors in his life.

In terms of oppression, he recognizes that it is out there even though he has not experienced "very much directly." He sees that oppression is systemic and that it exists at different levels and in different forms. Today he is best described as what Atkinson et al. (1993) would describe as introspective. He is introspective about the multifacets of his identity. He attitude towards dominant society is still somewhat conflicted, as exhibited by his statement that he is greeted there with "tolerance but not acceptance." Although his religiosity has increased, it is not "blind faith"; he continues to explore and ask questions as a participant in religious practice.

In adulthood, Suhas continues to identify as "Indian." As the Card Rating data indicate, the role of religion has increased in his life; culture and race also earn high rankings. The type of religiosity and the meaning ascribed to religion and religious practice changes over the life span (Mcguire, 1994). Religion played a role all throughout Suhas' life and has been the catalytic factor in his identity shift from and dominant orientation to an ethnic orientation. In K-12, it had a significant negative psychological impact because of the discrimination he faced as a result of being Hindu rather than Christian. Religion's presence during college had a different role in Suhas' life; it was about acquisition of knowledge and about spending time with his mother. The shift intensified the shift from a dominant orientation to ethnic orientation of his ethnic identity. As an adult, while Suhas makes a distinction between ethnic culture and

religion, religion is a strong force in his life. He goes to the temple on his own and conducts *pujas* at home with his wife, who is also Indian and Hindu.

Religion — in its many roles throughout his life — is thus the vehicle for the development of Suhas' ethnic identity from a dominant to an ethnic orientation.

Table 8.10. Farzad's Responses to the Card-Rating inquiry.

Category	K-12	College	Adulthood
Culture	3	5	4
Race	5	1	1
Religion	-1	1	5
Trips to India	1 *(East Africa)*	n/a	5
Family	2	4	5
Community	4	5	4 and 5*
Language	2	4	4
Regional	'no roots'	3	1
Self-Identifier	Indian American	African Indian American	Human Being

* Ismaili 5, Indian 4

Farzad, an Ismaili[60] male, has lived his entire life in the same metropolitan area. His parents and sister immigrated to the United States from Uganda in 1972, when Idi Amin expelled all the Asians; he was born in the U.S. Farzad has always had many other relatives who live nearby. He described growing up in a diverse suburban area until he was 12, and then moving to another suburban neighborhood that he described as "predominantly White." He attended a public school, where he was the only Indian student, until sixth grade. He attended a private school from seventh through twelfth grade where there were "many Indians in the school." Farzad reported his family going to mosque every Friday night and "one other night" each week while he was growing up. He went to college far from home at an institution that had "no diversity," transferring after his first year to an urban, predominantly-commuter college back near his home. Between the two, he took one year off and sold perfume out of the back of his car. Today he works as a software consultant.

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[60] Isma'ilism is a sect of Sh'ia Islam. A significant proportion of Ismailis are of Indian or Pakistani origin.

K-12

As a high school student, Farzad identified as "Indian American." Based on the quantitative data, Race is the most salient factor for Farzad during in his K-12 years. It is worth mentioning that he gives culture a "4" and that although religion is a "1," he assigns it a negative value.

He recalled first realizing his skin color was different in second grade. It was sometime in fourth or fifth grade, when epithets like "sand nigger and camel jockey"[61] were hurled at him by classmates, that Farzad "realized that I wasn't necessarily black, and I wasn't necessarily White."

> The biggest thing was the color. Um, you know, having grown up in this country, I really felt like I was an American kid in terms of, you know, things that I liked, the things that I wanted to do, you know, my tastes in music, my tastes in clothes, everything else was very American.

He mentioned attending as school with no other Indian Americans students so he was relieved when he switched to a private school that had ethnic and racial diversity. That was the first time he went to school with "another Indian and another person that, who wasn't either Black or White… that was actually very comforting — a big relief."

Aside from race, Farzad described religion as other challenge that he struggled with. "I was very aware of the fact that I was Muslim, and back in, you know, '79, '80, that was a very unpopular religion to be with a lot of what happened with the Iran hostages." Farzad's initial awareness of what it meant to be Muslim came from the media "when I was six or seven," and it was negative. He said his parents, although observant, never talked to him about religion; religion was simply "something we did." He added that he did not know what the rituals meant, and that the only things he "knew"

about Islam he learned from the media. Farzad had no information to counter the anti-Muslim stereotypes in the media. Although the Iranian Hostage Crisis was precipitated by a variety of political and diplomatic issues between the United States and Iran, Farzad felt the media reported the crisis as a "Muslim thing… I just knew that everything I heard about Muslim was bad, so it would have been nice to see others of my color."

In high school, he had to deal with his teachers' stereotypes about Muslims as well. He described being very uncomfortable when his ninth grade homeroom teacher frequently "joked" with him. The teacher would say,

> "You don't have a bomb in your backpack, do you?" And he would duck and make a big joke in front of all the other kids. I mean, he was a really popular teacher in school and we [Farzad and the other students] all kind of laughed and made a big joke out of it but it made me really uncomfortable… I don't know that I understood enough to go say anything to him about it.

His family's religious practice also set him apart from his high school classmates. At a time when it's all about fitting in and socializing with one's peers, Farzad was not able to participate in that most famous of American high school rituals – attending Friday night football games — because he and his family attended mosque every Friday night for prayers. Farzad reported that this caused him to start resenting his religion.

> I could see Christians get to go to church on Sunday mornings so it's very convenient, you know, and I had to go Friday evenings, like the biggest, the biggest social night of the week, and my God chose that as the Friday.

Farzad said Operation Desert Storm — which occurred during his senior year of high school — was the " first time [he] was really challenged about [his] religion." He spent a great deal of time in contemplation over whether he identified with the Americans

or the Iraqis. The reason for this contemplation was how the war was characterized by American media and political leaders. It was

> a heavily-publicized war about us Americans against – it wasn't so much about us against Iraq it was about us against the Middle East. It was against the Muslims and I think I had to reconcile with myself how I felt about that.

Farzad wondered "which side of the coin [he] really belonged to."

> At that point, I started to evolve as having a much stronger identity of the Muslim and having confidence in that, and having pride in that, and now all of a sudden, you know, this comes about in early '91. I had to really reconcile in my heart whether, whether I believed that we, that America, was right in what they were doing, you know, [or whether] Iraq was right.

He was angered by how the war was discussed in the media and in his classes with such a "high level of ignorance." For him, the fact that people talked "about 'Muslim' and 'Muslim terrorists' and 'Muslim bombers' instead of Iraqi leaders, Iraqi bombers, Iraqi terrorists" resulted " a stinging every time somebody [mentioned] that." "And, of course, that just, I think that just, um, exacerbated the whole issue of being Muslim it just highlighted it." Until tenth or eleventh grade, Farzad said, he would've wished to be White. However, he said he sometimes equated being Muslim with having brown skin, which "I would like to shed. If I was a White Muslim, I'm a White Muslim. Who's going to care? Who's going to know?"

One of the things that most defined his identity was the fact that he did not have a community as the other students of color did.

> Yeah, you know, like when we would pick fights, during the fight, that's when somebody, you know, some of the guys would [use racial slurs]. So I think it made me more aware of the fact that I didn't belong to a group, you know. At least the black kids, even though there were few of them, they were pretty tight knit and they, they kind of hung out

> together. Even though they mixed with everybody else, they, they just had that bond.

Although he had Indian American youth to associate with between seventh and tenth grade, he said this association didn't mean much to him because he felt he had nothing in common with them but skin color.

> The only thing we really had in common was skin color in terms of our Indian culture. You know, all of their families knew each other. They all sort of hung out together. They, they've been friends for years. They went to dinner parties together. My family was not part of that group, so we didn't have all that in common, just the fact that we were brown-skinned.

During most of his K-12 life period, Farzad reported not feeling connected to an ethnoreligious community; as a result, he felt he had no connection to culture. Although he was *exposed* to Indian culture in his home, which for him meant eating the food and listening to the music his mom liked, he explicitly made the distinction between exposure and feeling "a connection."

> In tenth grade, Farzad developed a community of Indian friends:
>
> The first time that it really became a connection was, you know, in high school, I started going to the IYA [Indian Youth Association] parties, meeting a lot more Indians, and so, you know, the fact that I was Indian now [and that] was okay.

College

In college, Farzad identified as "African Indian American." He became conscious of his African heritage after taking a trip to Uganda to visit relatives; the trip, when he was fifteen years old, caused a shift in his identity:

> After that [trip to Uganda,] I think I started to realize a lot more of the richness of the, of the culture and how much there was to offer and how – I guess I never really valued being an Indian until sophomore year of

> college because, you know, it was always something that set me apart from everybody else versus really bonding with a group of people, which is what I started to do in college. Um, had some very, very good friends and they were good friends of mine because they were Indian, because we could relate, because we could hang out together, because we sort of bonded certain things. You know, they would just sort of tell a joke or we would joke about the way White people thought of us or perceived us and, you know, not that we'd just sit around and be ultra-Indian all the time, but when those moments did come, it was like one of those shared [things].

During the college years, Community increases from a "4" to "5" and culture increases from "3" to "5." Race becomes less salient for Farzad, dropping all the way from "5" to "1."

In his first year, Farzad attended a college that where there were "very few" people of color. He faced some discrimination during his year at the predominantly White school. After one year he left and took a year off. Thereafter he attended an urban school that served mostly commuter students, where all his friends were "100 percent Indian" and he reported having no White friends. He enjoyed being in the company of co-ethnics:

> The fact that I was simply brown skinned was an automatic in to the social circle of the student center…You always have somebody to hang out, have lunch with, you always knew like there was like a spot in the library where everybody sat…You always knew a place where you could just go chill out and, and even though the group would rotate, there was always like five or six people always that sat… there, that you just go and just chill with them.

For him skin color "was an in," but unlike in high school – where all he felt he had in common with other Indian kids was skin color – he now had relationships and a community and so it was much more. "I definitely began to, uh, find much more cultural connection; whereas in high school, there wasn't a cultural connection, it was just [about

being] brown-skinned." He was involved with the campus Indian organization and was "always" with Indian people.

Farzad preferred to associate with the Indian student organization on campus instead of the Muslim Student organization, remarking that he felt he had more in common with the Indian students than the Muslim students. He discussed how he did not fit in with Muslim students because he is Ismaili. He did not "practice" religion the way many of them did and therefore was considered an outsider where with Indian cultural group he was considered an insider even though he is not Hindu.

During college, Farzad said, he became more comfortable with his identity because he realized "that Indian doesn't mean Indian, Indian means several different things"; he felt more comfortable with himself as an Indian after seeing the diversity within his collegiate community of Indian peers:

> I spent a lot of time learning more about my religion and more about my culture… So exposure to now not just like, you know, Punjabis or Gujaratis, but it is the Punjabi's, Gujaratis, Tamils, Telegu people, Bengali, and whatever else… I was much more comfortable with myself as an Indian [in this] plurality, the diversity.

Adulthood

In adulthood, Farzad identifies as a "human being." He says there have been significant changes to his religious identity from college to adulthood. In adulthood, Farzad's card rating data show that Religion and Trips to India are both rated "5." Culture, which was very salient for him in college, decreases to "4." As for community, in adulthood Farzad differentiates between his Indian community, which he rates a "4," and his Ismaili community, which earns a "5."

Farzad says that for him culture and religion are two different items. Culture was "100 times more important to [him] than religion." Farzad stated clearly how he distinguished the two: "Cultural [traditions] would be like the language or the food or, the Hindi music…and the Ismaili ones would [be] saying a certain prayer or a certain ceremony or going to mosque."

Even though his family came to the U.S. from Uganda, in adulthood Farzad traveled to India "because all [his] friends" had done so. Farzad visited thirteen cities in three weeks, and said, "I went to learn more Hindi." Supporting his collegiate understanding of diversity within the Indian community, Farzad said he found that "India really isn't one country, it's hundreds, and I wanted to experience the culture of all the different regions." Although he described no experiences "worth mentioning" that affected his ethnic or religious identity, he said the trip "really challenged my conscience," and made him "more socially aware than I was before." These reactions make Farzad unusual among the research participants; few who went to India, especially after one trip, saw the poverty and pollution there in terms of social awareness. Farzad was willing to critique his social awareness and take it to another level. In fairness to the other research participants however, this may be a product of the fact that Farzad's first exposure to India happened in adulthood. He never went there as a kid or had all those more typical pre-college experiences of finding India "dirty" and "gross," feeling constrained or alienated by family, or learning to look the other way when it came to poverty and disease.

Religion becomes salient for Farzad in adulthood not because he is "more religious than other years," but rather because the "religion is now a tie to my Islamic

community, which is very important to me." Although Farzad says "I consider myself a practicing Muslim," he considers himself not to be "so religious." (See Chapter 6: moral compass.)

> It is the ethic [of service] that I believe very firmly in, and so the way that I view service or, uh, giving back to the community ....So, you know, the role of Islam in my life has certainly influenced that aspect, but it hasn't made me ever put down a drink.

He considers himself to be less religious because of his definitions of what it means to be a Muslim, which includes eschewing alcohol and keeping the fast during "*Ramzan*."[62] He does neither. Farzad said he never fasted because it's not something that his family, or that Ismailis, emphasize. "Our sect is different from the rest of mainstream Muslims." The main reason he identifies as a practicing Muslim today is that he believes very strongly in the concept of *sewa,* or social service. He believes his most important "Muslim" acts are when "give[s] back" to his community by spending time with Ismaili kids at a youth camp in New Jersey. In a way that is intimately bound up with his identity as a Muslim/Ismaili, Farzad hopes to help today's teens grow up with a positive sense of self. It is so important to him to participate in these camps every year that he has negotiated with his workplace frequently to take Fridays off to take part in the long-weekend camp program; he negotiated this arrangement with his employer as part of his contract, and has now been with the company for three years.

Analysis and Discussion

Farzad exemplifies Identity Cluster III. The identity shift that occurs in his life is from a unidimensional to a multidimensional identity. Farzad identifies as "Indian

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[62] The term "Ramzan" is frequently used by South Asians (of whatever religion) to refer to the month-long Muslim holiday Ramadan.

American" during the K-12 period. Being Indian American is linked to skin color (i.e. race) for Farzad; race is the most salient factor for Farzad during this period. Religion is also noteworthy because Farzad assigns it a negative number. I want to highlight that fact that although Farzad's Card Rating data indicates race to be the most salient factor, most of the experiences he described in his interview dealt with religion.

During his K-12 years, two main themes emerge: (1) Farzad's lack of connection to an ethnoreligious community, and (2) the impact of the news and popular media's portrayal of Muslims. His self-identification as "Indian American" is based predominantly on skin color and his religious identity as an Ismaili.[63] Farzad felt no attachment to an ethnoreligious community and for that reason felt that he had no connection to Indian culture. For him, the mere *exposure* to dimensions of Indian culture and the *presence* of Indian peers did not "automatically" result in feeling a bond with the community; he remarked that all he had in common with those Indian peers was skin color.

His religion is also a salient factor in his life during K-12. Because parents never discussed religion or instructed him on the "whys" of the rituals they practiced, he learned everything he knew about his religion at the time from media portrayals of the Iran Hostage Crisis and other world events of the 1970's and 1980's. Suleiman (1997) argues that Muslim youth, like Farzad, have no source of information to counter the anti-Muslim stereotypes in the media. Immigrant parents can transmit only what they know (Fenton, 1988, Williams, 1992), and often are not formally educated about the religion, so the second generation learns only what they "pick up." Farzad didn't even get that

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[63] As indicated earlier, he uses the terms "Ismaili" and "Muslim" interchangeably.

much exposure; his parents, although they practiced Ismaili'ism and attended mosque weekly, never even relayed to him their own understanding of the religion.

When situations arose concerning his religious identity in school he often colluded with his peers in making jokes about Muslim terrorists. Atkinson, Morten and Sue (1993) would describe Farzad's reaction to the incident when a high school teacher joked about his having a bomb in his backpack reveals both appreciating and self-deprecating attitudes about his religious group. Although this conduct illustrates a classic example of internalized oppression (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997), the fact that he was so bothered by his teacher's remarks indicates that even in high school he had begun to question his attitudes and behavior — traits that up until that point had been for the most part oriented towards dominant modes of thought and behavior. This process came to a climax with his encounters (Cross, 1991) during the Gulf War, which caused him to examine deeply the way his religion, his race and his nationality interacted.

In College, Farzad identifies as "African Indian American." The change in the self-identifier is related to two critical incidents. First, he became conscious of his African heritage after taking a trip to Uganda to visit relatives, when he was fifteen years old; this led Farzad to develop interest in *his* culture after learning about his family's immigration history and developing relationships with family members in Uganda. Second, in college Farzad developed attachments to an Indian ethnic community.

There are two "things" that create a sense of community for Farzad during his college years. The Card Rating data show culture has the highest possible salience. He found he had more in common with a group of Indian peers "sitting together at the cafeteria" (Tatum, 1997) than just skin color. He became involved with different cultural

activities on campus. Farzad clearly indicates a preference to associate with the Indian student organization on campus over the Muslim Student organization, attributing that choice to the fact he did not "practice" religion in the say the way as members of the Muslim Student Association. As an Ismaili, he was not accepted as "real Muslim" and therefore was an outsider to the MSA, whereas with the Indian student organization he had insider status, even though he is not Hindu. Social identity theorists such as Hurtado et al. (1994) emphasize the overriding function of an individual's social identity is the process of categorizing oneself as an in-group member and others as out-group members; it is this process which creates and maintains attitudinal and behavioral distinctions favoring the in-group.[64]

As an adult, Farzad identifies as a "Human Being." He was adamant about not giving any other self-identifier. I believe his decision to give himself only this broadest of all possible labels is related to the fact that he sees and understands the multiplicity in his various social identities. He sees how people identify as "Indian," or as "Muslim," and sees how broad those categories are, and what a wide range of individual experiences they encompass.

As for community, in adulthood Farzad differentiates between his Indian community, which he rates a "4," and his Ismaili community, which earns a "5." The differentiation between the two communities in the card rating data as well as in parts of his narrative confirm how Farzad separates religion from culture.

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[64] Culture has a high salience during college because he identifies with the Indian community. Up until college, "culture" meant "color"; during and after college, "it meant something I valued a lot." He associated culture with race, and thus it carried no meaning except shared skin color. The culture only took on "meaning" for him once he developed a community. For Farzad, no community "equals" no culture; as an adolescent, the only thing he felt he had in common with the other Indian kids was brown skin — race, not culture.

After being part of an Indian (as opposed to Muslim) community in college, he has "come back to religion" because he found a place, the Ismaili Youth Camps, where he as a counselor he is not only accepted for his religious identity but has the chance to make younger Ismailis accepted for and strong in theirs. He continues to socialize with a predominantly-Hindu Indian community in his city, which is why "Indian community" still earns a "4."

For Farzad, the attachment to an ethno*religious* community is important for his expression of religion. During K-12 and college, Farzad did not have a connection to an Ismaili community and therefore felt unconnected to his religion. During the college period, this is demonstrated by the fact that he ranks culture (5) as much more salient than religion (1); he had a community, but it was an ethnic (Indian, but predominantly Hindu) community rather than an ethnoreligious one. Once he found himself among Ismailis he felt connected to a community through which he experiences religion. Without this community, he has no religious connection. As an adult, Farzad identifies as a "practicing" Ismaili; everything in his life involving religion occurs through his Ismaili community. Community is the conduit for religion (See chapter 6); without that community of people to gather with for religious purpose then he does not engage in religious expression.

Over his life span to date, Farzad's identity has shifted from a unidimensional identity that was primarily associated with skin color to a multidimensional orientation in which he understands the complex and dynamic nature of his ethnic, cultural, and religious associations.

Conclusion

These four Identity Clusters show that the ethnic identity development process for 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans follows multiple trajectories. As the narratives of the forty-one research participants reveal, the constellation of experiences that shape the trajectories of second-generation Indian American ethnic identity development involve the full range of factors discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The profiles of four research participants – Binu, Deepali, Suhas and Farzad – illustrate how experiences combine to shape various the trajectories of identity development that make up the four major Identity Clusters. The profiles also provide examples of how many nuances there are even in the constellation of experiences discovered in this study. The following discussion notes several more key observations about the trajectories of ethnic identity development.

First, ethnic identity for many of the research participants is situationally based. Indian American ethnic identities shift depending on the context in which the "question" is asked; situational ethnicity – exemplified by Binu's profile from Identity Cluster I – was in fact a phenomenon seen in all the clusters. The situational identities expressed by Binu and other research participants should not be mistaken for a "confused" identity Root (2000) and Phinney (1990). Rather, they are multiple expressions of her identity and stand for the fact that Indian Americans are simultaneously members of many groups – e.g., "Indian," "Malayali," and "American-born"; which of those identities comes to the fore depends on the context in which the individual participant is considering the issue.

Second, Indian Americans in the second generation can use the same label – e.g., "Indian," "Indian American" – but have identities that are configured differently and

have different meanings for each research participant (Hurtado, 1997). This demonstrates that any self-ascribed label tells only part of the story. What the label means to the individual can only be understood in the light of a more detailed inquiry. The ethnic identity development process is particularly complex for a group whose members are targets both racially and religiously and who also have a considerable amount of class privilege.

Third, second-generation Indian Americans felt "othered" ethnically, racially, and religiously by the interrogations that many of them received in the course of life to date. For some, this kind of questioning was so frequent, pervasive or prying that the questioning itself became a catalyst for the development of research participants' identities.

Fourth, the data show that an identity shift from a dominant orientation to an ethnic orientation (Identity Cluster III) need not involve an "encounter" experience that causes the change in orientation. Rather, the shift can arise merely out of the complex interplay of layers within the individual's ethnic identity. Some research participants did report negative experiences associated with their target-group membership as a racial or religious minority in the U.S. – experiences that constituted an encounter (Cross, 1991) or a critical incident (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997) that shaped their ethnic identity development process. On the other hand, many research participants experienced the dominant-to-ethnic shift without an encounter experience but instead as the result of changes in the social context, particularly the phenomenon of "sitting together at the Cafeteria" (Tatum, 1997) with other second-generation Indian Americans.

Of course, there is a range of other issues worth noting as distinctions between the clusters. These include:

- Two-thirds of the research participants (10) in Cluster III discussed another part of their identity being more salient than their ethnic identity.[65]
- Farzad notes that Ismaili'ism is a very young religion, and its traditions and rites are in the process of "evolving" towards more mainstream Muslim traditions – e.g., more prayers in Arabic – while Hindu-type traditions – e.g., certain songs – are being phased out. He understands that religion evolves and changes, an understanding which is atypical among the research participants as a group.
- Those who identify as Indian American and American have at best a minimal understanding of racism and/or religious oppression. Bipin notices acts against him but even those experiences that could clearly be considered covert racism, he tends to brush aside. The same is true of Irfan and Ashish, both of whom are physicians.
- One of the major distinctions between Cluster II and Cluster III is that the research participants in Cluster II recognize the structural nature of racism or religious oppression, while those in Cluster III who recognize racism or religious oppression placed the onus on themselves for being "different," "not normal," "from a different country," etc.
- Farzad realized he was an "other" in 2nd or 3rd grade, and he experienced "things… here and there" – e.g., a teacher blaming him for something he didn't

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[65] Cross, 2001.

do, often being picked last in softball or baseball even though "they knew I could play." He goes on to state, " I don't know if that was because of the color of my skin, I don't know if the teacher didn't like me." Young Farzad doesn't blame himself for the discrimination he's faced and he's questioning White privilege, but he doesn't realize that is what he is doing; this is important because Farzad's statements reveals that he when faced with the possibility of racial discrimination, does not put the onus on himself. On the other hand, young Suhas places the onus on himself, takes the responsibility and blames himself for having brown skin, for being so different. Here, Farzad is saying they treated me badly, maybe because of skin color or maybe because I was smart or they didn't like me or didn't know how to deal with me. But he's not saying, as Suhas did, "the teacher did it and I can see why because I'm different."

The social, cultural and historical contexts are the ground in which identity is embedded (Erikson as mentioned in Tatum, 1997). The sociocultural and the sociohistorical context have to considered when think about ethnic identity development. For example many of the other Cross's Nigresence model was after the Black Power movement. The research participants in Kim's study (1981) were part of a specific generation that directly and actively experienced the Civil Rights period. In the same way, the research participants in this study were affected by the media coverage of the OPEC oil crisis that occurred in the late 1970's and Iran Hostage Crisis and the Operation Desert Storm.

Ethnic identity development is formed by the various component of the cycle of socialization such as parents, family and ethnoreligious communities. Yet at the same

time, as Rumbaut (1999) indicates, self-identities and ethnic loyalties often influence behavior and outlook independent of families' status or the types of schools they attend.

Individual identity constructions are complex, context-related and changeable. The process that I am identifying is located not only at the core of the individual but also at the core of the community culture as noted by Hoare (1991) and Thompson (1996).

Indian Americans are members of target groups, racially and in many cases for religion also. As members of target groups, their socialization occurs within the umbrella of oppression. The ethnic identity development process for second generation Indian Americans as for other racial and religious target groups in the United States occurs under the umbrella of oppression (Adams, 1997). Layers of cultural complexity emerge with targeted social identities (Root, 2000). We saw with Suhas and many others (see Chapter 6) that perception of institutional and individual racism is bound up in a complex ways with the experiences of being a teenage child of immigrants today. While acknowledging discrimination, many research participants seem less willing to attribute this problem to racism (Olsen, 1997).[66]

There is general agreement that the history of racism as experienced by African Americans affects racial identity development in African Americans and Blacks. However most studies on Indian Americans examine ethnic culture, acculturation and assimilation, overlooking the ways in which experiences of racial and religious oppression affects the ethnic identity of second-generation Indian Americans.

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[66] Just like culture, religion is also dynamic particularly in immigrant community when traditions and rituals are constantly being reconfigured (Kurien, 2000; Min, 2000; Singh, 2001).

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Summary

The research findings reveal that for second-generation Indian American research participants a variety of salient factors affecting the ethnic identity process exist. Among the most salient are one's ethnoreligious community, or the absence thereof, and the extent to which the individual feels "connected" to that community. Other salient factors include dimensions of culture such as food, ethnoreligious celebrations, clothing and Hindi Popular films; trips to India; and one's family language. The salience of the factors – and even how research participants *define* certain factors, such as "community" – changes over the lifespan. The ethnic identity development process is dynamic and situational. Upon examining the constellations of experiences revealed in this study, it becomes clear that the ethnic identity development process takes multiple trajectories. The ethnic identity development process is located at the intersection of race, gender, religion, class, sexuality and socio-cultural and historical context. Experiences during K-12 and college have a continuing impact into the adult years because the pre-adulthood periods are a heightened time of ethnic identity development.

The unifying theme among these most salient factors is the research participants sense of connection to (or disconnection from) ethnic culture. Most of the participants in this study remarked on the importance of not "losing their culture." These concerns become particularly strong in adulthood, when many research participants have begun thinking about issues or marriage and family; "culture" was the foundation on which their

parents built their lives. The second generation – many of whom report little facility with their home language and less "religiosity" than they observed in their parents – worry whether they can build the Indian families they want to build.

Religion has multidimensional role in 1.5- and second-generation Indian Americans' ethnic identity development. Whether, social, spiritual or "symbolic," religion is omnipresent in the lives of second-generation Indian Americans, whether they consider themselves "religious" or not. Religion shapes how the research participants thought about their families, defined their communities, and identified themselves across their life spans. When the participants talked about their levels of "religiosity," it usually was a comparative concept. Individual interpretations of the term *religious* varied. The context, content and intensity of the way in which religion was present in the lives of the second-generation Indian American research participants varied across the lifespan. Religion was experienced through community, culture, family, belief and ritual, and knowledge/study. Religion made the research participants feel different from the people in their lives in school, college and the workplace. Often research participants experienced religious discrimination in the form of direct insults, Christian proselytzation, or inaccurate depictions of their religions in the media and popular culture. Perhaps more than any other factor, religion could have a profoundly positive or a profoundly negative impact on a research participant's self-image in any given life period; its impact over the life span was dramatic.

This study examined ethnic identity development and the impact of racial and religious discrimination upon the construction of identity. As other researchers have observed, encounters/critical incidents can have significant effects on the identity

development process. Discrimination can be overt or covert. The second-generation Indian American research participants in this study reported experiences that illustrate two forms of covert discrimination not noted in ethnic identity development literature: the Model Minority Myth and the 'Perpetual Foreigner' Phenomenon. Both racialize certain characteristics understood by mainstream American society to be typical of Indian Americans – e.g., accents and "book smarts" – and create presumptions that, by being hurtful or inaccurate, made research participants feel pressured or judged based on their race and ethnicity.

Other research participants manifested the kinds of identity shifts typical of those who experienced encounters or critical incidents – but did so without having such experiences. Most often, these were participants who reported that collegiate exposure to a large and diverse Indian American community had significant and usually "positive" effects on their identity development processes. This was equally true whether or not research participants felt connected to an ethnoreligious community during the K-12 life period.

Indian American ethnic identity development in the second generation follows multiple trajectories. The terms with which research participants identified themselves – e.g., "American," "Indian," "Indian American" – had very different meanings for different research participants. Many research participants shifted from a dominant orientation ("more oriented towards being White," in the words of one research participant) to an ethnic orientation over the life span. Others moved from a unidimensional understanding of their ethnic identity to a multidimensional identity that

incorporated a more nuanced understanding of Indian Americans and the Indian American community.

Implications

As a study revealing trajectories of ethnic identity development of second-generation Indian Americans during the "education years" of K-12 and college, the current study has implications for research and training in pedagogical techniques and for multicultural curriculum development. It also offers guideposts and, I hope, insight for scholars in the fields of ethnic studies and Asian American/South Asian American studies.

Education

This study offers three distinct lessons for educators in elementary and secondary education, as well as for those who teach at the college level. In a nutshell, these lessons are that (1) because Indian Americans are an "other" in America's bipolar racial paradigm, and do not come from a Judeo-Christian faith tradition, Indian American students are marginalized in the classroom and the curriculum. (2) Because the American conception of "racism" is based on the historical experiences of Blacks in the U.S., teachers and school administrators may not recognize discrimination against Indian Americans as such and often are the unwitting perpetrators of such discrimination. (3) The model minority myth exerts a pernicious effect on Indian American's self-image as students and their relationship to teachers, peers, and the educational process. As a result, students are overlooked, their needs are overlook and their identities are not affirmed in the classroom.

The experiences of research participants in this study offer ample evidence that because they are neither Black nor White, neither Jewish nor Christian, second-generation Indian American young people often feel marginalized in the classroom. As this study indicates, religion is often a major facet of second-generation Indian Americans' ethnic identities. Thus as teachers work to affirm students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds, religion's place in those identities must be acknowledged and affirmed. I am not asking teacher to address religion on a theological basis, but it must at least be affirmatively addressed from a sociological and anthropological standpoint by bringing students' religious backgrounds into the discussion of culture, identity and difference in the classroom. Multicultural education must account for the entire cross-section of students in American schools today and the full breadth of their experiences; it must no longer merely be "skin deep" — because the ways young Indian Americans think about themselves in the society of school and neighborhood run far deeper.

Another facet of this change involves coming to understand discrimination as touching on many more issues than just skin color. Because of America's racial history, "discrimination" and "racism" are often perceived only when they occur in their most overt forms —- the "Jim Crow" racism of the pre-Civil Rights era American South and the use of known racial epithets like "nigger." Teachers need to recognize covert forms of discrimination and address them. These include the mispronunciation of an ethnic name and the wholesale association of certain political acts or outlooks with a particular racial or religious group (e.g. the jargon of "Islamic terrorism" in international conflicts that are more properly understood as ideological or territorial in nature). Too often teachers and administrators, failing to understand these acts and omissions as discrimination (or at

least marginalization), have become the unwitting cause of Indian American students' thinking of themselves as invisible or undesirable.

Finally, Indian American students in classrooms today are suffering under the weight of the model minority myth, the perpetuation of the idea that Indian American students are inherently bright or inevitably come from "good families." Teachers have racialized the "qualities" of the early second-generation cohort of Indian American young people — those, like many of the research participants in this study, who are the American-born children of upper middle-class professionals. This one-sided outlook on where Indian American students "come from" may cause teachers to guide an enthusiastic young writer toward the sciences, to overlook domestic violence in the home, or to assume that the quiet and unassuming student is "doing just fine." During the period when I was writing this dissertation, I founded a mentoring program serving South Asian American high school students in Somerville, Massachusetts. The mentees in this program are disproportionately working-class, often recent arrivals to the U.S., who often are working two jobs themselves, and don't have the parental academic support that those in the research participants' cohort had. But because of the model minority myth, these young people are presumed to be bright and privileged. As a result, too many are "falling through the cracks": cutting school because they're too tired from their night job, or nearly failing classes because they lack English proficiency and parental academic support. The model minority myth leads teachers to misapprehend the needs of these students.

Asian American Studies, South Asian American Studies, and Ethnic Studies

Because this study drew participants from two regions where very little research on the second generation Indian American has been done, it shows the diversity of the Indian American experience outside of the more frequently-studied California and greater-New York City areas. It also shows that experiences of oppression have a significant impact on the ethnic identity development of second-generation Indian Americans; as noted below, this is an area ripe for additional study. I hope my research can debunk the myth, shared by many Asian Americans and non-Asian Americans alike, that as long as you're educated and economically successful, everything's fine.

This study shows that religion plays a major role, in a variety of ways, in ethnic identity development. Religion is a marker in the ethnic identity development of Indian Americans, existing alongside and overlapping with perceptions of race, culture, class, and gender; religion needs to be given equal consideration with these other factors — something which has not happened in the past. Religion has too often been left out of the ethnic studies paradigm. This study demonstrates that it needs to be incorporated into how we study and understand ethnic identity development, particularly for those groups which are not members of the dominant Judeo-Christian milieu of the United States. Just as other social identities are considered and given emphasis in Asian American studies and ethnic studies, religion is a force that needs to be acknowledged and addressed.

The experiences and processes that shape Indian American ethnic identity development can help us understand why people do the things they do today. With further analysis, it may become the basis for an understanding of why Asian American groups engage in relatively little political activism in the U.S. The same experiences may

help us understand the strong assimilationist streak; the desire to distance (politically and geographically) South Asian American communities from other communities of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos; and the prevalence of political conservatism in the Indian American community.

Future Research

Two major paths lie ahead for those who would continue and build on the research in this study. The first involves following the research participants' generation forward through their lives. What will this population look like five years from now, when some may have married and had children? What will happen when the second generation's parents age out of the leadership roles they now hold in the ethnic and religious organizations that played such an important role in many research participants' childhoods? It will be interesting to see where the trajectories of ethnic identity development lead, and how they change under the effects of global and local developments.

As the immigrant population ages, it will be interesting to see how this affects family dynamics and the maintenance of culture. Many research participants reported growing up seeing their parents take care of grandparents in a number of ways — including by having participants' grandparents come and live with their families for years at a time. (For many research participants, this was their primary source for learning the home language.) Will these patterns be repeated in second-generation homes? If so, how will the interaction of generations continue to affect ethnic identity development?

The present study examined in some depth the role of religion in ethnic identity development, and how research participants' perceptions of religion and religiosity

affected their identities. Religion is dynamic, however. Future research may address the issue of how American forms of Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Ismaili'ism change in light of the fact that few members of the second generation know the religions' scriptural languages. Another topic for study would be the ways in which these religions develop in the U.S. in the coming years and decades, and how those developments affect religion's role in the ethnic identity development process.

Another area ripe for future study is to explore the complexities of the intersections between race and religion, including how religion becomes racialized. What is the effect on individuals' perceptions of religion and religiosity when on the societal level religion is racialized and the commodification of religious artifacts occurs? How do such societal developments affect the religious beliefs of those in targeted groups? Second-generation South Asian Americans are in one sense "double targets" in this society. I believe religious discrimination has a different type of impact than racial discrimination (see Chapter 8); a major topic for future research would be to explore how and why the impacts differ.

Finally, future research could isolate particular aspects of the experiences described by my research participants, including encounters in-school versus those outside of school, perceptions of race and class among Indian Americans living in the south, or details of the "anything-but-racism" thought process. An interested researcher could isolate the experiences of a particular sub-group — such as Malayali Catholics — represented in this research; examine in greater detail the identity impact of the collegiate Indian community on second-generation Indian Americans who did not have access to an ethnoreligious community during the K-12 years; or explore how second-generation

Indian Americans understand and process race-related interactions, given parents' radically different paradigm of oppression/difference.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following are the subject areas that will be covered in my interviews. The interviews will be in an open-ended form. Please Note the following notation *** signifies my use of the self-identification term used by the participants.

Introduction

I will provide an overview of research project and my rationale for study.
I will have the participants sign consent form and explain confidentiality and my reasons for recording the interview.
I am interested in researching how people construct their identities. I will be asking you some questions concerning your identity at three specific stages of your life: adolescents, college years and today.

Self Identification and Related Components

Explain to interviewee: I am going to use a cardboard pie as a visual cue. I will ask the interviewee: Here is a pie that has many pieces. If the pieces represent different components of your identity, what do the pieces represent? What is your identity and what has gone into the making of your identity? How were these contents expressed behaviorally or sattitudinally?
Would your answer been different in college? If so, how? What pieces of the pie would contribute to your identity?
What about as an adolescent? How would you describe yourself? What pieces of the pie would contribute to your identity?

Adolescence

Now let's go back to your adolescence; tell me the story of how your identity has evolved.
Who were the significant people in your life at the time?
Did you ever consider yourself different from other kids? (neighborhood and/or school)
How?
What was the racial and ethnic composition of your school/neighborhood?
If so, when did you first realize you were different from other people?
How did you feel? What did you think? What effect did this event have in your life, your feelings about yourself, your family? Your friends?
Who were the key people in your life(with regard to race and ethnicity)?
What were key events (with regard to race and ethnicity) positive and negative - How did you deal with the situation(s)?

Upon reflection are there one or more significant events or individuals that you feel played a crucial role in your achievement of an *** identity?
What was the ethnic/racial/religious background of your friends?
Who were your role-models? An significant people in your life?
In what ways did these people impact on your attitude and behavior about yourself?
Was there ever a time(s) that you wished you were not of Indian ancestry? Why
Were there times you denied your Indianess? Why
How did you feel about being Indian American at this time?
In what ways did these feelings translate into behaviors?

College

Now let's go back to your college years; tell me the story of how your identity has evolved (developed)
Where did you attend college?
Did you ever consider yourself different from other students? How?
Who were the key people in your life(with regard to race and ethnicity)?
What were key events (with regard to race and ethnicity) positive and negative - How did you deal with the situation(s)?
As a college student what does it mean to you to have an identity as an ***?
Upon reflection are there one or more significant events or individuals that you feel played a crucial role in your achievement of an *** identity?
What was the ethnic/racial/religious background of the majority of your friends?
Who were your role-models?
In what ways did these people impact on your attitude and behavior about yourself?
How does your ethnic heritage have a place in undergraduate life in the U.S.?
Was your ethnic identity conflict with being an "American" college student? If so, how?
Did you experience isolation as an Indian American student from the Indian community on campus?
What was it like in class?
What is it like to be in school with other Indian American students? Without other Indian/Indian American students?
Was there ever a time(s) that you wished you were not of Indian ancestry? Why?
Were there times you denied your Indianess? Why?
Did you belong to any ethnic student groups?
Did you take any courses related to Indian religion/ literature/ languages/politics etc.
Tell me about the difference in your experience as an Indian American college student between your first year and last year of college.

Adult

Now consider your life today. Tell me how your identity has evolved since college?
Do you ever consider yourself different from other people today? How?
Who are the key people in your life(with regard to race and ethnicity)?
What are key events (with regard to race and ethnicity) positive and negative- How do you deal with the situation(s)?

What do you view to be significantly different about your background and experience which allowed you to develop an identity as an ***?
How do you identify today?
What does it mean to you to have an identity as an ****?
Upon reflection are there one or more significant events or individuals that you feel played a crucial role in your achievement of an *** identity?
What are the ethnic/racial/religious background of your friends?
Who are your role-models? An significant people in your life?
What type of impact have these people had on your life?
Have there been moments in recent times you wished you were not of Indian ancestry?
Have there been times you have denied your Indian ancestry?

Religion of your family: role in your life?

Adolescence
Religiously, how do you identify?
Where did you (your family) worship?
Was religion your primary reason for participating in group worship? Was it to preserve tradition? Was it for social reasons? Was it to celebrate home culture? Was it to strengthen local community? Was it for fun? Was it to speak the language?
How often did you attend religious events?
Did you attend "Sunday School" classes? If so, for how long? Frequency?
How well did you understand the rituals and traditions of the religion?
Were you aware of your *caste, jati* or *nat*? (For Hindus)

College
How religious were you? Did you perform individual acts of worship in college (did you attend a temple, mosque, church, Gurudwara) ?
How often did you attend religious events? Did you attend "Sunday School" classes?
Were you more or less religious as a college student compared to as an adolescent?
What kind of knowledge did have about your religion? How well did you understand the rituals and traditions of the religion?
How did you practice your faith?
What was your main reason for participating in group worship? Was it to preserve tradition? Was it for social reasons? Was it to celebrate home culture? Was it to strengthen local community? Was it for fun? Was it to speak the language?
How important was it for you to go to a temple, mosque, church, Gurudwara?

Adulthood

Are you still religious? How religious are you?
Are you more or less religious when you were in college?
Do you have a shrine at home/dorm room? (for Hindus)
How much knowledge do you have about your religion?
How well do you understand the rituals and traditions of the religion?
How do you practice your faith? Where do you worship?
Do you perform individual acts? Or do you participate more in group worship?
Is religion your primary reason for participating in group worship? Is it to preserve tradition? Is it for social reasons? Is it to celebrate home culture? Is it to strengthen local community? Is it for fun? Is it to speak the language?
How often do you attend religious events?
What do you need to retain the religious traditions and rituals?
How important is it for you to go to a temple or mosque?
How does belonging to _____faith make you feel about your Indian identity?

Discrimination

Over the years did any of your family members experience racial or religious discrimination?
How did they deal with it?
Did you experience any racial or religious discrimination?
When did you first begin to see yourself as a racial minority? Religious minority?
How did this happen? How did these experiences influence your life at the time?
How have they affected your ethnic, racial or religious way of identifying?

Interactions with Dominant Society

Do you feel that you have had to reject any of your family's values in order to "make it" in this society? What were they?
Do you believe that you have had to adopt any White values in order to make in this society?
In what ways would you say these events, behaviors, attitudes of yours represent identity conflict over being an Indian American? How were you able to resolve these identity conflicts? What did you do?
How would you characterize your behavior towards White people? Please give 2-3 illustrative examples (members of other racial minorities, members of the Indian American community?

Other

Is there anything that we did not touch on or discuss fully in the interview? Anything you want to clarify?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Research Study:
Ethnic Identity Development in 1.5 and Second-Generation Indian Americans

Dear Participant

Purpose of Study
The study in which you will be participating is part of a larger research project intended to look at Ethnic Identity Development in 1.5 and second-generation Indian Americans.

Procedure
If you agree to take part in this research you will be asked to talk about your experiences. Please answer with as much openness that you feel comfortable. This particular research procedure, Interviewing, entails listening to the experience of the participant. Personal experience is share and I do not wish to reveal any information that would put you in a vulnerable position. Instead my goal is to value the sharing of your stories.

Confidentiality
Your participation in this research is confidential. Your experiences will be described with anonymity in the manuscript of the research study. Pseudonyms will be used in this manuscript as well as in any journal articles or hook chapters in regards to this material. To maintain a high level of privacy, proper names on all transcribed tapes will be designated by a code. At your request, I will provide you a copy my final report.

Refusal or Withdrawal to Participate
Your participation is voluntary. You are free to stop participating in this research study at anytime, or decline to answer any specific questions without penalty.

Request for More Information
You may ask any questions about the research procedure at anytime throughout your participation in this study. There is a "swing-door" policy in effect, meaning, feel free to contact me after the interview if you want to add anything to the interview. Similarly, I may call you for with a question.

Participant
I agree to participate in this exploratory study on ethnic identity development in 1.5 and second generation Indian Americans.

I understand the information given to me, and I have received answers to any questions I may have had about the interviewing and research procedure. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as explained to me.

I understand that there may be risks involved.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and that I may withdraw form this study at anytime by notifying the investigator, Khyati Y. Joshi.

I had a minimum nine years of formal k-12 schooling, and attended all four years of high school, in the U.S.

I attended college/university in the United States

I am a citizen of the United States.

I am between the ages of 24 and 32.

I do not have any children.

Signature Date

Name (print)_____

Address _____

City _____ State _____Zip_____

Email _____

Phone _____

Researcher:

I have fully explained the nature, purpose, and possible risks and benefits involved in this study to the subject. I certify that the informed consent procedure has been followed, and that I have answered any questions form the participants as fully as possible.

Signature Date

APPENDIX C

RECORDING GRID FOR CARD-RATING DATA

	Adolescent	College	Adulthood
Culture			
Language			
Religion			
Nationality			
Visits to India			
Community			
Family			
Regional			
Race			
Gender			
Socio-Economic Class			

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT COHORT: GENDER AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION DURING EACH LIFE PERIOD

Gender	Female	Male			
	23	18			
Geographic Location K-12*	**Northeast**	**South**	**Midwest**	**Mid-Atlantic**	**West**
	9	26	4	6	2
Geographic Location College**	**Northeast**	**South**	**Midwest**	**Mid-Atlantic**	**West**
	14	24	6	4	2
	Bard	Agnes Scott	Case Western Reserve	Penn State (2)	U.C. - Berkeley
	Berklee School of Music	Duke	Michigan State	U. of Pennsylvania (2)	Stanford
	Boston College of Pharmacy	Georgia Southwestern U.	Northwestern		
	Boston U. (2)	Georgia State U. (3)	Oberlin		
	Brown	Georgia Tech (2)	U. of Chicago		
	Dartmouth	Miami University	U. of Kansas		
	Northeastern	NC State			
	Tufts (2)	Southern Tech			
	U. of Rochester	Trinity College			
	U. of Mass.	U.N.C.-Chapel Hill (5)			
	Western New England College	U. of Tennessee - Chattanoga			
		U. of Georgia (2)			
		Wake Forest			
		Washington and Lee			
Geographic Location Adulthood	**Boston**	**Atlanta**			
	20	21			

* Total exceeds 41 because five research participants (Bhavesh, Monali, Parth, Priti and Seema) lived in two geographic regions during the K-12 life period.

** Total exceeds 41 because eight research participants (Binu, Deepali, Farzad, Girish, Jaya, Mahesh, Monali and Vishali) each attended two or more colleges/universities.

APPENDIX E

MEAN RESULTS OF CARD-RATING DATA, BY LIFE PERIOD

n = 41 **n = 19*

K-12 Life Period

Factor	Family	Trips to India	Race	Culture	Soc-ec Class	Nation-ality	Com-munity	Religion	Gender	Lang	Region-al
Mean	**4.27**	**3.42**	**3.29**	**3.23**	**3.11**	**3.07**	**3.01**	**2.80**	**2.79**	**2.44**	**2.42**

Collegiate Life Period

Factor	Family	Trips to India	Culture	Com-munity	Race	Gender	Region-al	Nation-ality	Soc-ec Class	Religion	Lang
Mean	**4.23**	**4.05**	**3.91**	**3.74**	**3.39**	**3.16**	**3.05**	**2.90**	**2.80**	**2.76**	**2.71**

Adult Life Period

Factor	Family	Trips to India	Culture	Com-munity	Gender	Race	Religion	Nation-ality	Lang.	Soc-ec Class	Region-al
Mean	**4.62**	**4.50**	**3.90**	**3.87**	**3.41**	**3.35**	**3.33**	**3.30**	**3.21**	**3.20**	**3.15**

APPENDIX F

SELF-IDENTIFCATION ACROSS LIFE SPAN,
RELIGION AND GENDER, BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Pseudo-nym	Adolescence	College	Adulthood	Religion	Gender
Ahalya	Indian	Indian American	South Asian	Hindu	F
Alok	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	M
Anand	Indian	didn't want anything to do with being Indian	same as previous	Atheist	M
Anila	Indian	South Asian (AA)	Indian and my parents immigrated	Hindu	F
Anisa	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	F
Anita	My parents are from India	Indian or previous	Indian or "My parents are from India."	Hindu	F
Anya	American but my parents are Indian	Indian, born here	I am born here but I am Indian	Hindu	F
Avinash	Indian American	Indian American	American but my parents are Indian	Hindu	M
Avya	Asian American, Indian American	Indian American	South Asian American, Indian American	Hindu	F
Bhrugesh	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	M
Bindu	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	F
Binita	American	Indian American	Indian or Gujarati (based on context)	Hindu	F
Binu	Indian	Indian	Indian	Christian	F
Bipin	Indian American	Indian American	Indian American	Sikh	M
Deepali	Indian	Indian, born and raised in America	My parents emigrated from India, but I was born and raised here.	Hindu	F
Dinker	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	M
Farzad	Indian American	African Indian American	Human Being	Ismaili	M
Girish	American	American	American	Jain	M
Hussan	Ismaili	S. Asian American Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	M
Irfan	Indian American	Indian American	Indian American	Catholic	M
Jaya	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	F

APPENDIX F, *continued*

Pseudo-nym	Adolescence	College	Adulthood	Religion	Gender
Mahesh	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	M
Manish	Indian	Indian	Indian	Sikh	M
Mina	Indian	Indian	Indian	Athiest	F
Monali	Indian	Indian Woman and Pakastani	I am of Indian and Pakastani descent	Hindu	F
Nija	American of Indian extraction	Indian	I am of Indian background	Hindu	F
Parth	Indian	Indian American	Indian American	Hindu	M
Priti	Indian	Indian American	Indian American (sometimes SAA)	Hindu	F
Ravi	Indian	Indian	Indian and graduate student	Hindu	M
Saleena	Indian	Indian	South Asian	Hindu	F
Sarvesh	American	American	American of Indian descent	Hindu	M
Satish	Indian	Indian	Indian	Sikh	M
Seema	Indian	Indian	Indian	Christian	F
Shabnam	Indian	Indian American	Indian American	Hindu	F
Shiren	American of Indian descent	Indian American	Indian woman	Catholic	F
Sina	Indian	Indian	Indian	Hindu	F
Smita	American	Indian American	Second-generation Indian American	Hindu	F
Suhas	Identified more with being white	Indian	Indian	Hindu	M
Sweta	Asian	South Asian	Indian	Hindu	F
Vinay	Indian	Indian	Indian	Sikh/Hindu	M
Vishali	Indian	Indian	I am like an open coloring book.	Hindu	F

APPENDIX G

SELF-IDENTIFIERS ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN, BY LIFE PERIOD
(RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION, "WHAT ARE YOU?")

	Adoloscents	College	Adulthood
American	4	2	1
American*(with other id)	3	0	2
Asian	1	0	0
Indian	24	19	16
Indian American	4	11	4
South Asian	0	1	2
Other identifiers, by life period:			
Adoloscence	5		
	Identified more with being white		
	My Parents are from India		
	AA and IA		
	Asian		
	Ismaili		
College	8		
	African Indian American		
	My parents are from India		
	Indian Woman, and Pakistani		
	Indian born and raised in America		
	Indian, born here		
	South Asian American Muslim		
	Don't want anything to do with being Indian		
	South Asian & Asian American		
Adulthood	16		
	Human Being		
	I am born here but I am Indian		
	I am like an open coloring book		
	I am of Indian and Pakistani descent		
	IA and sometimes SAA		
	I am of Indian background.		
	Indian and graduate student		
	Indian and my parents immigrated		
	My parents are from India		
	Indian or Gujarati		
	Indian woman		
	Muslim		
	My parents are from India, I was born here		
	Second-generation Indian American		
	South Asian American and Asian American		
	Don't want anything to do with being Indian		

APPENDIX H

RATING TABLE FOR PRE-DETERMINED FACTORS
AFFECTING THE ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
IN SECOND-GENERATION INDIAN AMERICANS

A	K-12	College	Adulthood
1	Family	Family	Family
2	Trips to India	Trips to India*	Trips to India
3	Race	Culture	Culture
4	Culture	Community	Community
5	Socio-economic Class	Race	Gender
6	Nationality	Gender	Race
7	Community	Regional Identity	Religion
8	Religion	Nationality	Nationality
9	Gender	Socio-economic Class	Language
10	Language	Religion	Socio-economic Class
11	Regional Identity	Language	Regional Identity

* *Includes scores only from the 19 research participants who went to India during college.*

APPENDIX J

SALIENCE RANKINGS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FACTORS FOR EACH PROFILE SUBJECT, BY LIFE STAGE

Factor	Culture			Race			Religion			Trips to India		
	K-12	Col.	Adult.	K-12	Col.	Adult.	K-12	Col.	Adult.	K-12	Col.	Adult.
Farzad	3	5	4	5	1	1	-1	1	5	5*	n/a	5
Suhas	-2	5	5	-4	5	5	-2	3	5	3	n/a	n/a
Binu	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Deepali	4	2	2	2	1	1*	2	1	3	2	n/a	n/a

* "skin color"

* to Uganda

Factor	Family			Community			Language			Regional		
	K-12	Col.	Adult.	K-12	Col.	Adult.	K-12	Col.	Adult.	K-12	Col.	Adult.
Farzad	4	5	5	4	4	5, 4*	2	4	4	"no roots"	3	1
										Gujarati & Kutch		
Suhas	2	4	5	1	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	-2
										Marati		
Binu	5	5	5	5, 2†	5, 5†	4, 2†	5	5	4	5	5	4
										Malyali		
Deepali	4	4	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
										Punjabi		

* Ismaili, Indian

† Malyali, Indian

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